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ENGRAVED BY JOHN SARTAIN FROM A NEGATIVE.

I am, as ever, affectionately yours.  
G. B. Glanna







# LIFE AND DIARY

OF THE LATE

REV. THOMAS B. HANNA, A.M.

PASTOR OF

THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION OF CLINTON, PA.

BY

THOS. HANNA BEVERIDGE.

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*With Selections from his Sermons, and a Portrait.*

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“The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.”—Ps. cxii. 6.

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PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM S. YOUNG,—173 RACE STREET.

1852.



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ENTERED, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1852, by  
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WM. S. YOUNG, PRINTER.

TO  
REV. THOMAS HANNA, D.D.  
AS A TOKEN  
OF AFFECTIONATE REGARD,  
*This Volume*  
IS INSCRIBED.



## P R E F A C E.

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THE pen of the biographer is usually employed to record the incidents of a long and eventful life,—to chronicle the deeds of the warrior, the statesman or the poet, whose fame has been world-wide, and the records of whose achievements is called for by the universal voice of mankind.

Much humbler is the aim of this simple narrative. The subject of the following memoir was not one of the world's heroes. He occupied a higher—a nobler place. He was a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus—a soldier of the cross—called, chosen and faithful. He wore no crown on earth; but now, in heaven, his brow is encircled with a crown of glory.

The life of his Master has been written by the Spirit of God; yet multitudes can see no beauty in that simple record; and, finding nothing attractive there, turn away from its pages with indifference, and even aversion. Jesus of Nazareth is, to them, as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness. To such, the life of His servant, whose chief excellence consisted in his imitating his Master, and which is penned by the erring hand of man, will not be likely to present any thing attractive.

But, to those who believe, and to whom Christ is precious—who, honouring the Great Example, can see something to love and admire in every one who bears His image, we feel assured that the following sketch will not be devoid of interest; and, by the blessing of God, not unproductive of good.

For the young servant of Christ, we think the inci-

dents here recorded will have a special interest. He will read here the record of trials and discouragements, similar to his own; and he will see also the fulfilment of the gracious promise of his Divine Master, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

It was, at first, expected that a memoir of our departed brother would have been written by his intimate friend, the Rev. Mr. Lee, of Pittsburgh; but the state of his health, and the multiplicity of his engagements, as pastor of a large and increasing congregation, prevented this; and the task has fallen on one who, while conscious of his own incompetency, takes a sad pleasure in thus testifying to the worth of a much loved brother, whom he claimed as a dear friend, while he lived, and with whom it was his mournful privilege to be present throughout his illness, and in the hour of death.

Circumstances have rendered it desirable to issue the work at as early a day as possible. This will account, to some extent, for its many imperfections. Had it been convenient to bestow more time and labour on its preparation, it might have been rendered more complete.

The sermons here published have been selected from a much larger number. Many others, of at least equal excellence, might have been added; but this would have increased the size of the volume much beyond the original design. Should it be found desirable, they may be given to the public at some future day.

And now, dear reader, we place this volume in your hands, requesting your careful perusal of it, and commending both it and you to the God of providence and of grace, who has declared that, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

T. H. B.

*Canonaburgh.*



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LIFE AND DIARY.

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# LIFE AND DIARY

OF

## REV. THOMAS B. HANNA.

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### CHAPTER I.

HIS EARLY LIFE.—LITERARY AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.—LICENSURE, &c.

THOMAS BEVERIDGE HANNA, the subject of this memoir, was born near Cadiz, Ohio, March 27th, 1828. His father, Rev. Thomas Hanna, D. D., (now of Washington, Pa.,) was, at that time, pastor of the Associate Presbyterian congregation of that place. His mother was Jemima Patterson, eldest daughter of Robert Patterson, Esq., formerly of Mount Pleasant, Ohio, now a resident of Wheeling, Va.

A few words respecting the character of this lovely, Christian woman, will serve to show the influence of a pious mother in training a beloved son. Few women were more extensively known in the church to which she belonged. She was distinguished for her amiable disposition, her kindness and hospitality, her benevolence, and her genuine, unassuming piety. These qualities were manifested in all the relations which she sustained in life; as a wife, a mother, and a friend. She took a deep interest in the religious training of her children. She was called to her rest in July, 1847. To the influence which her sickness and death had on the mind of her son, we shall, afterwards, have occasion to allude.

The influence of the godly example, and careful, Christian instruction of his parents, was manifest in his early youth. He loved and revered them, and received

their counsels and directions with implicit confidence and meek submission. He continued to manifest, while he lived, the same filial affection and reverence, and often expressed his thankfulness to God that he had been so highly favoured.

His common school education was obtained in Cadiz, under different teachers. He early discovered a fondness for books, and was always willing, and even anxious to attend school. So unwilling was he to be absent for a single day, lest he might fall behind his class, that, when the weather was unfavourable, his father had to take him to town (a little over a mile distant) on a horse in company with his older brother. A good portion of his English education, and the rudiments of Latin and Greek, he acquired under the tuition of several students of theology, now ministers in the Associate church, among whom may be mentioned, the Rev. Messrs. William Galbraith, Thomas Gilkerson, Jacob Fisher, James R. Doig, and perhaps others.

He commenced the Latin grammar when nine years old, and although he did not pursue his studies regularly from that time, he entered the Freshman Class in Franklin College, Ohio, in the autumn of 1840, at the age of twelve, and continued there, with little or no interruption, till August, 1844, when he completed his course, and received the first degree in the Arts.

He was a member of the Jefferson Literary Society, and was twice chosen, by his fellow members, to represent them in literary contests.

Among his papers have been found a number of Essays and Addresses on various subjects, written during his collegiate course;—essays and orations on “The Progress of Truth,” “The Influence of Ambition,” “The March of Mind,” an excellent one on “The Benefits of Christianity, as contrasted with Infidelity,” one on “The Bible,” and an address delivered to the graduates of the Jefferson Literary Society.

The highest honours of his class were awarded to him, and the valedictory was delivered by him, on commencement-day.

It cannot be ascertained when his thoughts were first



directed towards the ministry, as he was never heard to express an inclination towards any other profession. He appears always to have had this in view, even in his early youth.

He joined in the full communion of the church at Cadiz, in the summer of 1844, when but a little over sixteen years of age.

He was admitted to the study of theology, by the Presbytery of Muskingum, in the autumn of the same year. In November he came on to the Theological Seminary at Canonsburg, and commenced his attendance on the lectures of Rev. Drs. Martin and Beveridge. Dr. Martin, the Professor of Didactic Theology and Hebrew, was removed by death in the spring of 1846, and the vacant chair was filled, in 1847, by the election of Rev. Dr. Anderson, who entered on the duties of his office the last winter Mr. Hanna was at the seminary.

As the session only extended from the beginning of November to the last of March, he had the intervening seven months to himself. This time he spent, not in idleness, as many are tempted to do, after so long confinement, but in pursuing his studies, in general reading, in preparing discourses for Presbytery, and, during part of the time, in teaching a district school, and also a few Latin scholars, in a school on his father's farm.

While at the seminary he was a diligent student, and made commendable progress. When he commenced his theological studies, he was not much over sixteen years of age; yet few would have suspected his extreme youth, either from his appearance, his conduct, his natural talents, or his acquirements. His manner was always characterized by sobriety, modesty, and unassuming piety. Such qualities are not those which usually secure the regard of the world; but, in him, they were blended with so much cheerfulness, amiability, and true kindness of heart, that he soon became a universal favourite. By his winning disposition, he engaged the affections, and by his piety and talents, he secured the respect of all.

It soon became evident that he possessed more than ordinary gifts for preaching. This was known, not only to the professors and students, but also to the citizens of

the place. They were always anxious to know when his turn would come to deliver a discourse in the chapel of the seminary, and by their presence, and fixed attention, on these occasions, manifested their high estimation of his ability.

During his sojourn at Canonsburg, he secured the esteem and regard of his teachers and fellow-students, and made many warm friends, in whose hearts his death has left an aching void. No one ever passed through a course of study in that place, who was more universally esteemed and beloved, and whose departure was more deeply regretted.

In June, 1848, he was licensed, by the Presbytery of Muskingum, to preach the everlasting gospel. In accordance with his appointment by Synod, he supplied three months in the Presbyteries of Muskingum and Chartiers, and then, about the 10th of September, proceeded to Wisconsin, to which field he had been set apart by the Board of Home Missions.

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## CHAPTER II.

### HIS LABOURS, AS A MISSIONARY, IN WISCONSIN AND NEW YORK.

WE now see this young and inexperienced servant of Christ leaving the place of his nativity, endeared to him by many tender recollections, forsaking his beloved friends, and departing to a land of strangers. He dearly loved his home, and the joys of the family circle; for he was of a most tender and affectionate disposition, and the thought of leaving such a home, and such pious and loving friends, to live among those who were entire strangers to him, and many of whom had no fear of God before their eyes, was naturally painful to him. But, in the cause of his Master, he was willing to endure all this. He was ready to spend and he spent in His service; and wherever duty called him, there must be his home.

Let us then follow him to the distant West, and witness his undiminished faith in God, amid the many privations and trials which there awaited him.

When he arrived in Wisconsin, he found that his *home* was to be at Waterville, in Waukesha county. The people were generally poor, and as they possessed but few accommodations, he took boarding at the village tavern, and, by the kindness of a young physician of the place, was permitted to occupy his office as a study-room.

In a letter to his friends at home, dated Nov. 13th, 1848, he writes as follows:

"I need not tell you what gratification your letter afforded me. Suffice it to say, it was a letter *from home*, (and there's no place like *that*,) bearing the impress, and breathing the spirit of a father's love,—telling me, too, of the warm affection of *other* hearts within that *dear old homestead*. Such being its character, you will readily believe me, it was *interesting*, aye, *delightful* to me. To the individual who has just started out in life—whose first leap on 'the tide of human affairs' has landed him away out in a dark corner of the earth, hundreds of miles from the scenes of his earlier years,—it may well be imagined that the recollections of home will be especially dear, and every item of news from that cherished spot will be an *interesting volume*.

"Perhaps it would be well for me now—since I am fairly launched on the ocean of life, and must hereafter paddle for myself—to give over the thoughts of home, and endeavour to consider every place my home, where I am called to labour. But this is a point of self-denial, to which, I freely confess, I have not yet attained. \* \* \* I think it will be a long time before I can enjoy myself here as well as I used to do at Cadiz, Athens, and Canonsburg.

"I am frequently pained to see evidences of 'Laodiceanism'—indifference to divine things, neglect of religious duties, and conformity to the world. These things have often discouraged me. I can find but little pleasure in intercourse with such people; feeling that, to be *faithful*, much of my time with them must be spent in *reproving*. It may be that I am not patient enough with them—that I am looking for the fruits of the gospel too soon. I hope it may be so. I wish, at least, that it may, in the end, turn out better than I now anticipate.

"Since I wrote you last, I have had a trip up North, about a hundred miles from this. I visited a settlement of Seceders in Winnebago. The principal man among them is D—— M——, a brother of Rev. A—— M——. I was much pleased with them. Their prospects are very good. I expect to visit them again, and will probably spend some time with them. On my way, I visited another small settlement at Fond du Lac. Was very well pleased with them also. They are few in number, but spirited. They offer very liberally towards supporting a missionary. On my way back I was overtaken by quite a snow-storm. I rode about a day and a half in it—snowing all the time. I became very wet—the snow melting as it fell. I lost my way two or three times in the deep forests, and almost began to despair of getting back.

"I preached, yesterday, to the Ottawa people. In the forenoon I got along with some ease to myself, but not so in the afternoon. I was languid and tired, and thought I was dragging. The people, however, seem to have thought most of the latter sermon. I am to preach at Achepin next Sabbath. . . .

"I hope you will write to me soon. Don't forget me. Think how glad I am to hear from you in this 'corner of the earth.' By the way, that expression, in the beginning of the 61st Psalm, often occurs to my mind, as applicable to my own situation. I think I can appreciate the feeling which inspired that Psalm. . . . Pray for me."

The following are extracts from a letter to his father, dated Dec. 14th, 1848.

"I find it difficult to know how to conduct myself among the people here. I do not like to act the part of a *reprover*; it is very unpleasant, and yet the circumstances seem to require it. I know I am not doing my duty towards them, and yet I cannot bring myself to a strict course of dealing with my neighbours and associates, such as the important office I occupy requires. And, besides, the influence of such examples is, I fear, injurious to myself. I feel that I yet need much encou-

agement and assistance from others; and when not only these are wanting, but their opposites exist, it has a great tendency to depress and dishearten. I often long for the encouraging, reviving society of Christian friends, which I once enjoyed; and with the Psalmist, 'my heart is poured out in me,' when I reflect upon the times when I used to go, with the multitude, to the house of God, with voice of joy and praise; and then consider that I am now cut off from that privilege, and now my companions are strangers to God. . . .

"I preached, last Sabbath, at Ottawa. I don't see much difference in the prospects as yet. The people attend very well, and seem to be pleased; but whether the word is taking root in any heart, is not, as yet, manifest. We have established a Sabbath school, which will, I hope, be beneficial. The children seem to take an interest in it. . . .

"Last week, I visited brother C—— and lady. Found them well—living in a little log cabin, hardly large enough to turn round in, but yet apparently quite contented and happy. I went down in a sleigh, and had a very unpleasant ride. It blew and snowed on me all the way going, and rained most of the way returning.

"I received a letter, last Monday, from a committee of Clinton Congregation, giving me official notice of their call. They are quite urgent, and wish, if possible, some answer now. I have replied, in a brief note, that I could give no definite answer before the close of the present synodical year. My present feelings are favourable to them; but I did not tell them so. I wish to be guided by a sense of duty, and not by mere personal preferences. I shall look for advice from you on this, as well as other matters.

"Yesterday I preached at Achepin, to a small congregation. Did not get along with very much satisfaction. In the evening I preached to another congregation, about five miles on this side. Next Sabbath I am to be at Ottawa, and, in the mean time, have a sermon to write for them.

"I received three letters to-day; one from J. T. Brownlee, one from F. A. Hutchinson, and last, but not least,

one from Sarah Jane, Mary, and Joseph. The perusal of them afforded me much gratification,—particularly the last.

“Hoping that I may enjoy a place in your affectionate remembrance, and in your frequent, fervent prayers, I remain,

Your affectionate son,

“T. B. HANNA.”

After Mr. Hanna's departure to Wisconsin, his father was united in marriage to Miss Sarah R. Foster, Principal of Washington Female Seminary. Subjoined to the foregoing letter to his father, is a brief one to his new mother. There is so much candour, and such a touching beauty in it, that we cannot refrain from inserting it here, and also the appropriate reply which it elicited, as models worthy of imitation.

TO MRS. SARAH R. HANNA.

“Dear ‘*Mother*.’—I confess it does seem strange—almost unnatural, to greet you thus. Applying a ~~name~~, once deemed the sacred and inalienable appellative of one now no more of earth, to an individual whom, in times past, though much respected and admired, even imagination had never invested with that title, as to me, it will not seem strange to you, that my mind is filled with conflicting emotions. I need not—I cannot describe these emotions. Only permit me to say, how strange and unaccountable are earth's mutations! How like a dream is life! ‘So like a dream, we scarce know where we are.’

“Strange, however, as it would once have seemed, 'tis no less true,—you now occupy the position lately made void by the departure of one around whom my earliest and warmest affections were entwined. And I rejoice that one so worthy has been found to fill that place; and willingly and heartily do I bid you welcome into our family circle, and greet you—*Mother*.”

“I cannot promise you a complete transfer of that affection which I cherished for the original bearer of that endearing name, but I can promise you the sincere regard of an affectionate friend. A long acquaintance with you—personally, and by reputation,—and your present position, as the companion of a *beloved father*, unite in securing you a high place in my regard.

"I find you are not altogether unknown, even in this dark corner of the earth. I have heard many speak of you—many who had some acquaintance with you, or at least with your family, in New York. I think the majority of the settlers here are from that state. I have met with a number from Washington County, N. Y.

"I shall be glad to have a line from *you* in the next letter from home, which, by the way, I hope will not be long delayed. I am glad to hear of the continued prosperity of your school. . . . With sentiments of the highest regard, I remain, &c.

"T. B. HANNA."

#### REPLY OF MRS. H.

"Washington, Pa. Jan. 1849.

"Dear Thomas,—Your congratulations and affectionate greetings were kindly received. Well do I know what mingled emotions take possession of the mind, and the consequent embarrassment, almost paralyzing every effort, when we attempt to address personally, or by letter, one filling a station such as I now occupy. Yes! having myself experienced the feelings occasioned by such a change of relations, I know how to sympathize with others; I can feel deeply for you.

"I have some idea, also, of the difficulty of discharging acceptably the various duties arising from my new relations, and of receiving from you, and the other children, an appellation which, to a great extent, must be nominal.

"Nature may have formed *two husbands* for *one wife*, or *two wives* for *one husband*; but never has she formed *two fathers*, or *two mothers*, for *one child*. This view is not held out, as a shield, to screen myself or others from any or all the duties of a natural mother. With such sentiments, then, dear Thomas, do not imagine that I will be unreasonable in my demands on your affections. No! They must, necessarily, to a great extent, be sacred to the *dead*. I rejoice that you are a child of so worthy a mother. I will endeavour to aid you, and the other children, in cherishing the memory of *one* whom I too loved,—one, whose amiability of character, and numerous other good qualities made her a general favourite.

"I have received the utmost kindness from your family and friends. May God grant me grace to discharge faithfully my duties as a wife and mother.

"Your father and the children have, doubtless, given you the general news. We hope to see you in the course of four months, and when here, that you will enjoy yourself, and your presence add to the happiness of the family.

"I shall always be pleased to hear from you:

"Your affectionate mother,

"SARAH R. HANNA."

We quote again from a letter addressed to his father, bearing date, Jan. 8th, 1849.

"At present, I have four regular places of preaching:—Ottawa, three miles from this, (Waterville,) each alternate Sabbath;—Achepin, about eighteen miles north, about one-third of the time;—Warren, thirteen miles distant, and five this side of Achepin, where I preach in the evening, after preaching at A.;—Lisbon, fifteen miles north-east, whenever I can.—No regular proportion of time. These are my usual places of preaching. Neenah and Fond Du Lac,—the former one hundred miles north, and the latter seventy, also require part of my time. I have visited them once, and expect to do so again before I leave.

"I have it in contemplation to make an exploring visit, about the first of February, into the interior of the state. There are some people, I understand, near Madison, about seventy or eighty miles west, whom Rev. Isaac Law visited when he was out here, and who, it is thought, should receive some attention. I am not certain yet whether I shall go or not; but if the sleighing continues as good as it is now, it is quite likely I will.

"I hope I am often remembered in your prayers. I feel that I need all the assistance that can be derived from many 'effectual fervent prayers of the righteous.'"

The following we extract from a letter to his friends at home, dated January 30th, 1849. It is written in a more cheerful spirit than some of those that precede it. He seems to have been somewhat more encouraged.



“In the good providence of God, I am still enjoying good health—as good as I have ever experienced. Our winter has been very severe, and almost every one is suffering the effects of it, in bad colds, &c., but, as yet, I have escaped entirely. This is the more strange, since I am so much exposed. I have had to ride some of the coldest days, and several days when it rained very hard on me: sometimes I have had to spend very cold nights in houses and beds which afforded me but little shelter; but notwithstanding all these things, my health continues uninterrupted. In this fact I recognise the goodness and providential care of our God; for He only could have thus preserved me. To him I desire to render all the praise.

“I enjoy myself, for the most part, pretty well. The people are very kind, and I am getting accustomed to their peculiarities. I now generally have very good congregations to preach to; they attend well, and seem to be pleased. . . . There is a great deal to be done here yet, before the mass of the people are Christianized. . . . To the individual possessed of the tender feelings of the Psalmist, there is abundant cause presented here to make ‘rivers of water run down from his eyes.’ Against this current of infidelity and vice how weak are all our efforts! How truly may we say, ‘we have no might against this great company that cometh against us!’ But it is encouraging to know that we can safely commit the success of our efforts to God. ‘Our eyes are upon thee.’ ‘The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but *mighty through God*, to the pulling down of strongholds.’

“Last Sabbath I preached at Achepin. Had a much better attendance than usual. Preached on John i. 29. ‘Behold the Lamb of God,’ &c. Had a good deal of freedom, and thought the audience were somewhat interested. On the evening of the same day preached to another congregation in Warren. Attendance good. Text, 2 Cor. v. 1.—a delightful subject! On Thursday evening, last week, at the request of a New School Presbyterian—and a very good man too, I think—I preached in a very fine school-house, about eighteen miles north-east

of this. The night was unfavourable, being very wet; but still the attendance was very respectable. I believe I preached with as much ease and satisfaction to myself, as I ever did. Subject, 2 Cor. v. 20. I have a number of invitations to preach at different places through the country—more, I fear, than I will be able to comply with. . . . I am sometimes much amused, as well as flattered, with the remarks of some of the old Scotch folk. My preaching, they say, reminds them of their own country—on this account, I suppose, that I preach by ‘heads and particulars,’ which is very uncommon here. . . .

“Your last was very interesting, in all its parts, not excepting the little ‘billets,’ sent by the children. I hope you will continue to write so. . . . My love and best wishes to you all. I often remember you individually at the throne of grace, and hope to be similarly remembered by you. . . . Wishing you all the blessings of providence and of grace, I remain, &c.”

Our last extracts shall be taken from a letter to his father, dated April 23d, 1849. His remarks are truly solemn and impressive, and well worthy of a careful and attentive perusal.

“I am still in the enjoyment of excellent health. Providence has indeed been bountiful to me. I would desire to record the loving-kindness of the Lord with thankfulness. What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? I would desire to go softly all my days, in view of my unworthiness; and, at the same time, rejoicingly, in view of the freeness and richness of God’s favours.

“I feel in a peculiar frame this evening. I am sometimes doubtful whether the state of my heart proceeds merely from an excitement of my natural feelings, or from a higher source. We have just passed through a solemn sacramental season in this congregation. (Waterville.) Yesterday the Lord’s Supper was dispensed to the little flock of Christ in this place. It was, to me, a solemn season; and, I think, was so to all. I do not remember ever having participated in the ordinance with such feelings.

“Mr. Collins was present, and officiated as dispenser. He preached on Friday and Saturday, and gave us very suitable discourses. I preached, yesterday, on John vi. 55. ‘For my flesh is meat indeed,’ &c. It was a grand subject. I think I never felt so much interested, and so free in thought and utterance. . . . Mr. Collins debarred, and dispensed the elements, and I then added some remarks on Song ii. 16. ‘My beloved is mine, and I am his.’

“The number of communicants was over thirty, some of whom came from sixteen to twenty miles. The congregation was very large; a number having been drawn by curiosity, to behold the (to them,) novel scene. The meeting was held in a large barn. I think there was a deep solemnity resting on the minds of the audience generally, and particularly of the communicants. It was scarcely possible to resist the impression that we were, indeed, in the house of God—the gate of heaven.

“We had but two of an accession. They were an old Scotch gentleman and lady, who walked about fourteen miles for the purpose of uniting with us.

“Mr. Collins preached to-day on Rom. xiv. 16,—a very good and appropriate discourse.

“On the whole, I trust that this has been a refreshing season to many souls—that many will have cause to remember it, long hence, with rejoicing. It has warmed up my feelings towards these people more than all my former association with them. I was much affected, to-day, in parting with some of those who had come from a distance. They seemed much affected by the thought that, most probably, we should see each other’s face no more. I almost feel disposed to give up all my prospects in the east, and remain where I am. The people express their feelings so strongly, that I can scarcely resist their entreaties. However, with regard to this matter, my prayer still is, ‘Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?’ O that he would grant me direction! for I know not what I ought to do.” . . .

It is unnecessary for us to comment on these letters. They present an interesting view of the trials and discouragements with which our young brother had to con-

tend, and which are incident to a missionary life in the far West. They show his anxiety as to the results of his labours—his joy on recognising any evidences of improvement, and his unshaken faith in God. It is certainly deeply interesting to behold this inexperienced youth, although exposed to many trials, dangers and temptations, in a strange land, yet maintaining his integrity, and his trust in the promises, and keeping a conscience void of offence towards God and man. We see, in all this, the power of divine grace, and its adaptation to support the soul, even under the most discouraging circumstances.

In May, 1849, Mr. Hanna returned to Washington, and was once more, for a brief period, permitted to enjoy the pleasures of home.

At the meeting of the Synod, at Allegheny, in May, calls were presented to him from Cambridge, O., and its connexions, in the Presbytery of Muskingum, and from the Associate congregation of Clinton, Allegheny Co., Pa., under the care of the Presbytery of Chartiers. The latter of these he accepted. But, following the advice of the Board of Home Missions, which agreed with his own inclinations, he decided, before entering on his duties as a pastor, to labour five months, as a missionary, in the city of New York. He accordingly went there in the month of June, and remained until the end of October, labouring, with acceptance, in what is called the Mission Church.

While he was there, the cholera was making fearful ravages among the inhabitants of that city; so that, in consequence of this, his labours were much increased.

In a letter to the writer, dated New York, Aug. 13th, 1849, he says,

“Since I came here, I have been enjoying myself, for the most part, very well. My health has been good. Although the pestilence is around me, and hundreds are falling before it, I have thus far been mercifully preserved. I had but one attack which had any appearance of cholera, and that was very slight.

“On account of the sickness prevailing in our midst, I have had a good deal of visiting to do. A number of our people have been, and still are labouring under affliction,

and, consequently, require considerable attention. This, connected with the labour of preparing a sermon each week, (which I have made it a rule to do,) keeps me pretty busy.

"Our congregations are, neither of them, large — smaller now, perhaps, than usual, in consequence of a number having left the city, and many who remain being sick. Still we hope the prospect is encouraging. I do not believe, however, that either of the congregations will increase much until they get settled pastors. The plan of changing ministers every few months is very unfavourable to the growth of a congregation, particularly in a city. . . .

"With respect to our people, I find them, in general, very agreeable. I enjoy myself among them very well. I should not, however, choose this, or any other city, as a permanent place of residence. I enjoy it very well for the time, but my habits and tastes are much more adapted to a quiet country life. There is too much bustle, confusion, and excitement here. I might perhaps, in time, become accustomed to this; but, at present, the quietness and beauty of a country life have many more attractions for me. . . .

"Write to me soon, and let me know the circumstances of Rev. A. Anderson's death. I have heard none of the particulars. What a solemn warning is this melancholy event to us! Let us 'be also ready.'"

We shall only offer, further, a few extracts from a letter to his friends at home, dated New York, July 23d, 1849.

"I have still reason to record the goodness of the Lord, in preserving me in health and safety, in the midst of the wasting pestilence. I have not, as yet, had any sickness, or any thing to prevent me from attending to my regular duties. . . .

"My love to each of you. You are all often remembered in my prayers. May I have an interest in yours. May you all be members of the family of heaven, and thus be connected by a bond which none of the changes of life, nor even death can dissolve."

In the commencement of his diary will be found an entry, which has reference to his residence in this city.

## CHAPTER III.

## HIS ORDINATION AT CLINTON.—PRIVATE JOURNAL.

ABOUT the first of November, Mr. Hanna returned from New York, and commenced preaching at Clinton. After the usual trials, he was ordained, by the Presbytery of Chartiers, to the office of the ministry, and installed pastor of the Associate congregation of Clinton, on the 13th of December, 1849. The sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. M'Elwee, and the charge to him, as pastor, was delivered by his father. The services, on this occasion, are said, by those who witnessed them, to have been peculiarly solemn and impressive.

A Private Journal was found among his papers, after his death, commencing about this time, and continuing till the time of his last illness. This was evidently not intended for the public eye, but only for his own private use. Yet it has been thought proper to publish it entire, omitting only some few passages relating to persons yet alive. Its perusal cannot fail to be interesting, as showing the way in which his mind was exercised; his seriousness and devotion; his watchfulness over his own heart; and the deep interest which he took in the affairs of the church, and especially in the welfare of the people committed to his care. We would commend it particularly to those who, like him, are in the morning of life. We would affectionately and earnestly urge them to read, with care, this touching record, and, like him, to choose that better part which shall never be taken away.

We present this as a better record than any we could give, of his life and labours as pastor of the congregation at Clinton.

There is but one entry, previous to his settlement; which relates to the few months which he spent as a missionary in the city of New York. It is as follows:

"Dec. 10th, 1849.—The summer of this year I spent in New York City. Boarded at Mr. M'G——'s, a very fine family. Roomed with Rev. Byron Porter, who was also preaching there at the same time. Enjoyed myself very well for the most part; but, in looking back, have

much reason to lament my neglect of duties, lightness of conduct, carelessness, &c. May these sins not be charged against me.

"Became acquainted with some very excellent persons. [Here follow some twelve or thirteen names.] Was frequently called on to visit the sick. Enjoyed some interesting conversations with experienced believers in this condition, from which, I trust, I derived some profit to myself. But O how far I failed in *my* duties to them! During my stay there, the cholera prevailed to an alarming extent; sometimes taking off seven or eight hundred a week. And yet, during all, I was preserved in life and health. My soul, bless thou the Lord.

"On the whole, in reviewing my sojourn in New York, I have much reason to thank God for the health which I enjoyed—for the comforts and enjoyments with which he favoured me—for the opportunities he gave me of usefulness—and for the strength he afforded me for discharging my duties. And yet, on the other hand I have much cause for sorrow and penitence, on account of my great deficiencies, unfaithfulness, and consequent inefficiency in his service. My prayer is, that God would not only pardon these sins, but, by his grace, enable me to triumph over them, and make me, henceforth, more devoted, faithful, and efficient in his work."

The next entry, and that which properly begins his journal, was written on the day previous to his ordination to the work of the holy ministry, and installation as Pastor of the Clinton Congregation. All comment on it would be superfluous.

"Clinton Pa., Dec. 18th, 1849.—Having accepted a call to labour in the Associate Presbyterian congregation of this place, as their stated pastor, I am now about to be set apart to this office. To-morrow is the day appointed by the Presbytery of Chartiers for attending to the work of ordination. In view of the near approach of this solemn scene, I have, this day, endeavoured to prepare myself for it, by a secret dedication of myself to God, and to this work, in prayer. After remembering, with thankfulness, the many distinguishing mercies I have received from my God, from my youth and earliest

infancy to the present time—acknowledging my many transgressions, and my unworthiness in his sight—and especially bewailing my unbelief and hardness of heart, which are still, to an alarming extent, chargeable to me—humbling myself before God, on account of these things—and endeavouring to impress myself with a sense of the solemnity and responsibility of the work in which I am about to engage—and sensible of my utter insufficiency, in myself, for meeting its responsibilities—endeavouring to rely, by faith, upon the all-sufficiency of Christ, ‘whose I am, and whom I serve’—I have taken upon me, on my knees before God, the following solemn *ordination vows*, which I here write out, in order that they may be often before my eyes, and that I may thus be enabled, through grace, to guide my conduct accordingly.

“I. I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice.

“II. I believe and acknowledge the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, &c. [The rest is the same as in the Formula, except that it is in the first person.]

“Dec. 13th, 1849.—This day, in the presence of a large congregation, I took the foregoing vows upon me. And now,

‘Thy vows upon me are, O God,  
I’ll render praise to thee.’

“O for grace to enable me faithfully to discharge them! May He who has said, with special reference to his ministerial servants, ‘Lo, I am with you alway,’ fulfil that gracious promise to me. I may say, in a deep consciousness of my weakness, ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ and yet I rejoice that His own word authorizes me to add, ‘My sufficiency is of God.’ Make thy grace, O God of grace, sufficient for me! Grant more devotion to thy cause—more love to souls—more enlarged views of divine truth—more diligence and perseverance in business—and, by thy co-operating Spirit, abundant success! *Amen.*

“Dec. 15th.—Preparation Saturday, in view of a sacramental Sabbath—Sermon by father, from Psalm lxxviii. 18. ‘Thou hast received gifts for men,’ &c. I. The



gifts. II. For whom they were received. III. When, and IV. For what purpose.

“On the day of ordination, the sermon was preached by Wm. M. M’Elwee, on John xxi. 15—17. Doctrine—Love to Christ the great qualification for the gospel ministry. A very appropriate and excellent discourse. The charge to me, as Pastor, was delivered by my father, and that to the congregation by R. J. Hammond. The services throughout were solemn and impressive.

“Dec. 16th.—The Sacrament of the Supper was this day dispensed to my new charge. I preached the action sermon, on 1 Cor. v. 7—8. ‘Christ our Passover.’ Father debarred, and served the first and last tables. Mr. J. G. Rankin and I served one table each. I endeavoured to direct the faith of the communicants, and my own also, by the declaration of the Spouse. Cant. ii. 16. ‘My Beloved is mine and I am his.’—The language of appropriation and dedication. May it ever be the language of my heart.

“Dec. 17th.—Thanksgiving Monday.—Sermon by father, on Ps. iv. 3. ‘The Lord hath set apart the godly,’ &c. 1. The character described—the godly. 2. How and when were they set apart. 3. For what purposes. A very appropriate and interesting subject. May it be impressed on my heart, and on the hearts of all this people.

“Dec. 31st.—Another year is about closing upon me. With all its pleasant, as well as its mournful events, it is gone. With all its long list of mercies by me received, and misimproved—with all its duties neglected, and sins committed—it has passed—never to return until it meets me in the final reckoning at the bar of God! Solemn, impressive thought! What will be the character of that meeting? Shall I hail each passing scene of 1849 with satisfaction, as it is *then* read out to my remembering conscience from the Book—the judgment book of God? Can I then retrace all the varied scenes of my varied life, during the just expiring year, with no other emotions but that of pleasing—satisfied remembrance? Ah no! Sin has been too deeply interwoven with the events which this year records, to permit me to look back upon them

with other than emotions of shame and contrition of spirit. O how many duties have I omitted or carelessly performed! How many opportunities of doing good neglected! How many mercies have been unthankfully received! How much time has been squandered in idleness and vanity! How many vile, unworthy, polluting thoughts have been cherished in my deceitful heart! How many 'idle words,' and words impure and sinful have passed from my tongue! And how often, and how deeply, has my conduct swerved from the holy law of God—dishonouring Him, and giving occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme! What a multitude of sins a slight review of a few short months exhibits, as chargeable to my account!

"And now, how shall I meet and answer these charges, when they are judicially presented in the final judgment? I cannot now retrace my steps, and, by a different course of conduct, blot those charges out. Nor can I atone for those iniquities by any present penances, or by any future acts of devotion. For all that I can do, these charges still remain written in the book of God's remembrance, awaiting my summons to the judgment-bar, to fix my final sentence of—'*Depart!*'"

"But I rejoice that a way of escape *yet* remains. The *blood of Jesus Christ* cleanseth from all sin! 'In *Him* we have redemption through his blood—the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of his grace.' I would desire, then, this day, to make even reckonings in the blood of Christ. With all the sins of the past year before me, in all their heinousness and aggravations—in full view of that deep damnation which I justly deserve on account of them—I would hold up the blood of Christ as a perfect satisfaction to thy justice, O God! and upon this basis I rest my confidence that thou wilt pardon mine iniquity, and not bring me into condemnation. And to this Saviour, who has redeemed me from going down to death, I now dedicate myself anew—resolving, in the strength of divine grace, that if it should please Him to spare me here, during another year, I will endeavour to spend it more in His service, in doing His work—and in preparing for the enjoyment of himself—than any which I have yet passed."

## CHAPTER IV.

## PRIVATE JOURNAL.—CONCLUDED.

“JAN. 1st, 1850.—Turned over another leaf in the book of Time. As yet it lies a blank page before me. With what inscriptions shall it be filled? Shall it be, like Ezekiel’s roll, ‘written within and without with lamentations, and mourning, and wo?’ Or shall it record events of mercy, calling for gratitude and praise? The future, only, can determine. I would not desire to solve the question now. Only let me endeavour—so far as my instrumentality shall be employed to fill up this, as yet, blank page of time—to write upon it, by my life and conduct, a record of joyfulness—a record exhibiting God’s glory promoted, sinners saved, and my own eternal interests advanced. Lord, teach me so to number my days that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.

“Jan. 4th.—Returned yesterday from my first attempt at family visitation. Succeeded better than I expected. Found the exercise, indeed, rather pleasant. Became acquainted with several very fine, and, I trust, pious persons. Examined on the questions—Man’s chief end—The Redeemer of God’s elect—Faith in Christ—Repentance and Prayer.

“Jan. 7th.—Preached yesterday on 2 Cor. v. 1. Had considerable freedom, and felt interested in the subject. Trust it may not be without some good effects. Tried to make it appropriate to the occasion—the beginning of a New Year. Explained the 2d Psalm—a truly gospel song—full of Christ. I still sigh for enlargement in my work; and especially for more of the spirit of *personal devotion*. O how delightful would the work of the ministry be, were my heart always in a frame corresponding to its holy exercises!

“Called to-day to see —, who has been, for some time, under severe affliction. Found him calm and composed—not disposed to talk much, but apparently desirous to hear religious conversation. Endeavoured to direct his mind to God as the Author of chastisements, and hence to warn against murmuring. ‘I was dumb,’

&c. Endeavoured also to point out to him the source of comfort—the mercy of God in Christ. After prayer, came away—promising, at his request, to call again.

“Jan. 9th.—Just returned from my second attempt at family visitation. Visited thirteen families in Elder Harper’s district. Found all at home, and ready to receive me. Examined on the same questions as before, and ‘What is justification?’ Had some satisfaction; but not in all cases such as I could desire. Lord, pour out thy Spirit on this people, and revive thy work amongst them! Grant more earnestness and devotion, and qualify me more abundantly for acting the part of a *wise* and *faithful* shepherd.

“Saturday, Jan. 12th.—Just finished a sermon on John xvii. 17. Commenced it yesterday, a little before noon, after vainly endeavouring, for several days, to frame a discourse on 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. I think I have reason to believe I had assistance from above in preparing this discourse. I had much freedom and ease in writing. I would desire to be thankful, and to seek further aid in delivering it. O for preparation of heart for the services of the sanctuary! Impress, O God, thy truth upon my heart, that I may be enabled to speak experimentally, from the heart to the heart!

“Called this evening again to see —, [the same individual mentioned above.] Found him very low—apparently even at the gates of death. He could not talk much. Prayed with him, and spoke a few words. I would earnestly pray that God may remember him in mercy—that he might be plucked as a brand from the burning—a trophy of King Jesus’ power to save.

“Monday Jan. 21st.—Returned this evening from Robinson, where I had been attending a dispensation of the Supper. Mr. M’Elwee preached on Saturday, on Song iv. 16. ‘What will ye see in the Shulamite?’ and to-day on Acts xx. 24.—‘Finish my course with joy.’ Mr. Rankin, on Sabbath, on John i. 29, ‘Behold the Lamb,’ &c. All very fine discourses. May they be deeply impressed on my heart. I still have reason to lament my leanness—my want of liveliness and heartiness in my Master’s work. O Lord, revive me! bring my

soul out of prison. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

“Wednesday, Jan. 30th.—Returned last evening from Allegheny, having been there assisting Dr. Rodgers at the dispensation of the Lord’s Supper. . . . It was a very pleasant season. May it long be remembered as a season of good to many souls.

“Called to-day again to see —. Seems to be mending. Trust this affliction will be of some use to him spiritually.

“Feb. 21st.—To-day I finished my regular course of family visitation. Spent two days and a-half in Elder Purdy’s district. Feel almost wearied out. Found the people generally at home. Had some interesting visits—others discouraging. Many are very cold and careless. Preached on Tuesday evening, at Mr. T. Adams’, on Job xiv. 1, 2. Had a good audience, and got through with ease to myself.

“The whole number of families in the congregation I find to be about 60—number of members about 125.

“March 11th.—A bright Spring morning—all nature smiling in beauty, and sending up a silent hymn of praise to God. O that my soul were more deeply impressed with the burden of its song! Endeavoured to preach yesterday on Isaiah xlv. 24;—a very interesting and important subject—but succeeded very badly. Was not properly prepared—depended too much on my extemporizing abilities; and God left me to feel my own weakness. Felt much vexed and discouraged by the result—principally, I think, because I thought the subject one of vital importance, and I wished to give my people clear and accurate views of it. Hope still that my efforts may not have proved entirely fruitless. The word spoken, though in much weakness, *He may* accompany with power. O God! grant that it may be so! May it be more impressed upon my own heart! And may I learn a lesson from my partial failure yesterday, which will be of benefit hereafter—the necessity of diligence and prayerfulness in preparation for the pulpit.

“April 22d.—Just passed through my second communion season in Clinton, assisted by Doctor Rodgers.

Preached yesterday, (Sabbath,) on John vi. 55, a discourse I prepared last spring in Wisconsin. Was very hoarse, having taken a very bad cold a day or two previous. Was enabled, however, to get through with more satisfaction than I could have expected. The season was a pleasant one, and, I hope, profitable to many. Admitted five applicants to communion. . . . . Admitted them all in the presence of the congregation, a thing not done here heretofore. The ceremony was solemn, and, I think, calculated to produce a good effect.

"May 6th.—A bright, pleasant, Monday morning, after a long, hard rain. Yesterday was a very wet, disagreeable day, and, in consequence, our congregation was quite small. Endeavoured to preach on Matt. xxv. 14—30, and Mark viii. 34. Did not succeed very satisfactorily. Was not sufficiently prepared; and, besides, the smallness of the audience, the gloominess of the weather, and a bad cold, under which I was suffering, all combined to depress my spirits, and render me very unfit for preaching. I trust, however, that the day's work may not be entirely lost.

"Last week I paid a visit to Washington, in company with my old friend Hans W. Lee. Enjoyed myself very well, too much indeed, for I found that when I returned, my heart was so much taken up with its earthly gratifications, that it could not easily return to the sober realities of pastoral duties.

"May 12th.—Preached to-day on Zech. vi. 13, first clause; and Phil. i. 21. Found them both delightful subjects, and only lamented my weakness in setting forth the richness of the matter they contain. Last week I was peculiarly indisposed for preparation for the pulpit. Labouring under a severe cold, I was very stupid and lifeless—could scarcely study at all. I feared considerably that I might fail, in consequence, to-day; but was agreeably disappointed. I was much assisted by the strengthening Spirit. O for gratitude for this mercy! To-morrow I start, (Deo volente,) for New York, to attend the meeting of the Associate Synod. I expect to be absent from my congregation for three Sabbaths. May the Good Shepherd watch over them and me, in the mean time, and bring us together again in peace and safety.

"June 11th.—Reached home again on Friday, last week. Had a safe, and, in general, a pleasant journey. Left Washington, Pa., on May 14th, in company with father, and arrived at Washington city on the 15th. Remained there two days. Visited the Capitol—heard speeches, in the Senate, by Foote and Clemens, and in the House, by Brooks. Very much entertained. Visited the President's house, Patent office, Smithsonian Institute, &c. On Friday left for Philadelphia. Arrived there on Saturday morning. Remained until Tuesday, assisting Dr. Cooper at a dispensation of the Supper, on Sabbath. Tuesday went on to New York. The sittings of Synod were, in general, pleasant. Several important measures were adopted, among which were the revival of the Trinidad Mission, and the appointment of two brethren as missionaries,—Rev. J. Scott and Rev. W. H. Andrew—the establishment of a Mission in Oregon, and the appointment of the Revs. J. P. Miller and Jos. M'Kee, missionaries. May the Lord of the harvest smile upon these efforts to extend his cause. The subject of union was discussed at some length, but without producing any definite action. The discussion indicated a considerable difference of feeling, if not of sentiment, among our brethren, in respect to that measure. After determining various other matters, of less importance, Synod adjourned, to meet on the 3d Wednesday of May, 1851, at Xenia, Ohio.

"In returning home, I spent one Sabbath in Philadelphia, and enjoyed the society of some esteemed friends there very much. Left Philadelphia on Tuesday, June 4th. Travelled via. Pennsylvania railroad, canal, and stage to Pittsburgh. Out two nights in stage. Pretty nearly used up. Arrived in Clinton on Friday evening. Found the people generally well."

The next entry, dated July 10th, relates to an unfortunate occurrence in his ministry. He had been led, by misrepresentations and false statements, to do what he afterwards found was wrong, under the circumstances; and although to most persons it might seem a very small matter, it appears to have deeply affected him. After stating the case, he says,—

“This places me in a bad position. How it may result, I know not. I may be involved in difficulties—my character may suffer. I feel deeply hurt. Fear I have done a serious evil. But I think I can say, ‘in the innocency of my heart have I done this.’ I was imposed on by the representations of ——. I ought, perhaps, to have inquired more particularly, but had no suspicions. Lord, lay not this sin to my charge. Let it not be the means of injuring my character, and thus weakening my influence, as a minister of thy word, among this people. It will be a lesson to me for the future.

“Monday, July 29th.—Preached yesterday, on Jude 3, and Matt. xi. 28. Succeeded tolerably—better in the forenoon than in the afternoon. ‘Contending for the faith’ is a very interesting subject. About the middle of the afternoon service, we were interrupted by the alarm of *fire*. A great many people arose to go out, and, supposing there was something serious, I dismissed the congregation, and went too. The fire was in a cabinet shop of J—— P——, which was utterly consumed. It was with much difficulty that it was prevented from spreading over the village. After the fire was checked, we returned to the church, and finished the exercises. I could not help noticing a striking coincidence in connexion with this affair. Just before the alarm of fire was given, I was speaking of the uncertainty of earthly possessions, and the folly of making them our portion. The fire, by which much property was destroyed, occurring just at that time, seemed to be a remarkable confirmation of the truth. I referred to this, afterwards, and trust it may not be without some good effect.

“Sept. 20th.—A very sickly season this, in this region. The dysentery is prevailing to an alarming extent. Seventeen persons have been taken away by it, within two weeks! And yet nobody seems to lay it to heart. O that these providences might be made awakening to the careless and secure! Nothing but the special grace of God can make them so. Men can see their fellows dying all around them, and yet continue careless and indifferent, until death at length knocks at their own door. I have reason to record, with gratitude, amidst the almost



universal mourning, that my own people have, as yet, comparatively escaped. But one death, and that an infant. But how long it may continue so, we know not. In view of the present calamities, I have been preparing a sermon for Sabbath, on Eccles. vii. 14. 'In the day of adversity, consider.' May the Spirit of all grace aid me to speak the truth.

"Oct. 28.—We have passed through a scene of severe affliction in this neighbourhood. The dysentery and typhoid fever combined, have been making fearful ravages among us. Since the above item was penned, our congregation has suffered more severely than any others around us. Five of our number, including two ruling elders, have gone down to the house appointed for all living. In less than two weeks, four members of the same family were taken away—James Taggart, sen., his wife, and two daughters. Since that, James Taggart, jun. has also been called away. Thus two families have been entirely broken up, and the little remnants left desolate indeed. Our congregation, also, has lost important members. Truly we have been made to drink wine of astonishment. O God! is it not enough? Wilt thou not now stay thy hand, and bid the ravages of disease to cease?

"We trust the disease is abating. It has been truly a distressing season. Upwards of thirty persons, in less than six weeks, have been taken away from our little community. May the dispensation not be without some good fruits. Yesterday, for the consolation of mourners, many of whom were present, I preached on 2 Cor. iv. 16–18, and Isaiah lxi. 2, 3,—both very interesting subjects.

"Nov. 18th.—A cold winter day. Preached yesterday, on Luke viii. 18. Congregation rather small, it being a very cold, disagreeable day. Had the pleasure of hearing a lecture, in the forenoon, from W. H. Wilson, on the temptation of Christ;—Matt. iv. 1–11,—a very interesting and instructive discourse. To-day, he left for Oil Creek—his first ministerial mission. Blessings attend him! If spared and prospered, he will, I doubt not, be a useful labourer in the gospel field.

"Dec. 13th.—The first anniversary of my ordination and installation as pastor of Clinton congregation. I

have now laboured one year in this place—with what success, the disclosures of the great day alone will reveal. One thing I can say—I have been with this people ‘in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.’ I feel that I have done much less than I might have done, for the glory of God, and the good of their souls. I have neglected many precious opportunities, and coldly and lifelessly improved many others. O! if the Judge were strict to mark iniquity, and the blood of souls were strictly required at the hands of the watchman, on every failure or neglect of duty, who could stand before Him? I feel that I could not. But it is a comfort that that blood which we preach unto others, for the remission of sins, is open to *us* also, and is sufficient for *our* cleansing—not only from *personal*, but also from *official* guilt. The blood of Jesus Christ ‘cleanseth from *all* sin.’ O for a more lively faith in that atoning blood!

“But whilst bewailing, and pleading pardon for the past, it becomes me also to consult my heart with reference to the future. What are my determinations?—To go on as I have done?—or to endeavour to be more earnest and devoted? O my God! help me to resolve the latter! Enable me, like Elihu, to say, ‘If I have done iniquity, I will do no more;’ and, like Paul, ‘forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I *press* towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ I would again renew my vows to God, and pray for grace more faithfully to fulfil them. I have reason to be thankful that, during the past year, I have been favoured with uniform health. Although much sickness has prevailed, I have been spared, and have not lost a day by ill health. Have dispensed the supper three times, assisted by father, Dr. Rodgers, and Mr. Murray—admitted nineteen new members—lost, by death, during the same time, six, by removals, three. Increase very slight. Am almost discouraged by the prospects of the congregation. But still I trust that if the Lord of the harvest has work for me here, he will yet bless my labour—if not, he will direct me to some other location.

“Dec. 17th,—Our fourth communion season, since my

settlement here, took place on Sabbath, the 15th. Dr. M'Elwee assisted, and preached some very fine sermons on John vi. 68, 69, and Prov. iii. 17. I debarred on the characteristics of the blessed, described in the Beatitudes, Matt. v. 3-9,—a very fine subject. Felt deeply my want of personal experience of those characteristics. Was much assisted in my public, but was sadly cold in my *personal* exercises. Lord, forgive this sin, and quicken me by thy good Spirit.

“Admitted four new members—three on examination—one by certificate. Trust the season has been profitable to many souls.

“Feb. 3d, 1851.—More than a month entered on the New Year! How little do we realize the flight of time! Days, months, and years roll round, but we scarcely are aware of their presence, till they are gone to the irrecoverable past. O! with what solemn lessons is the rapidity of time fraught, if we had but ‘ears to hear!’ But how senseless and stupid we are! With the solemn realities of the judgment day and eternity hastening rapidly on—and conscience, and reason, and revelation, all telling us that soon, very soon, those now future scenes will, to us, be *present* realities—still we grovel amidst the vanities of time, as if this world were our ultimate—our *only* state of being! O for a quickening influence from above, to dispel this soul-destroying delusion! O for a heart to feel the realities, the certainty, and the nearness of the judgment-bar! Surely, such an impression, deeply and permanently fixed, would detach the heart from its earthly baubles, and fix it on things above. Surely, such an impression—if any could—would render us *diligent* in business—fervent in spirit—serving the Lord. Blessed Spirit! sink this solemn impression deeply, permanently and immovably in my heart! Breathe upon me, that I may live!

“Yesterday I preached on the nature and duty of prayer. Rom. xii. 12. Had considerable freedom in delivery, but was much depressed, before and after, with the consciousness of inability to speak with sufficient personal experience. O for the Spirit of grace and supplication! May it be poured abundantly, not only upon me,

but also upon all this congregation, and upon the whole church of God.

"Feb. 24th.—Preached, yesterday, a discourse which I had prepared two years ago, in Wisconsin, on 'The Sabbath.' Ex. xx. 8. Succeeded in delivering it with ordinary freedom, but was considerably depressed by the consciousness that I had not exemplified all I preached. While condemning worldly thoughts and worldly conversation on the Sabbath, conscience very forcibly suggested Rom. ii. 21. May I be enabled to *teach myself* the truths I have endeavoured to enforce upon others. Read, last evening, Dwight's sermons on the 4th, 6th, and 7th commandments, and on the evidences of regeneration. The latter are very searching, and clearly illustrate the danger of self-deception in this important matter. The serious perusal of those discourses is surely sufficient to convince any one of the necessity of seeking the Spirit's aid in self-examination. 'Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.'

"April 23d.—A bright and beautiful Spring morning! How cheering, after days and weeks of clouds and gloom, to see the sun once more shine out unclouded!—to hear the little songsters of the air warbling their strains of gladness, and all nature apparently bathed in the sunshine of brightness and beauty! Fit emblem of the soul, blessed, after a season of desertion, with the returning tokens of the love of God!

"We are again on the eve of a communion season. O that this day, in its *natural* loveliness, may be a precursor, an emblematic harbinger of *spiritual* enjoyments, on the coming Sabbath! To-day I meet with applicants for membership. May I be directed, by the good Spirit of God, in the examination, so that I may be kept from encouraging any whom he would discourage, or *vice versa*.

"April 30th.—Communion season over. Mr. Lee preached on Saturday, on Ps. ix. 14; Mr. Brownlee, on Sabbath morning, on Rev. v. 12. Mr. Lee debarred on 'Lovest thou me?' Mr. Collins preached on Sabbath eve, on Psalm xxi. 1, and on Monday, on Heb. xii. 1-3. The exercises throughout were interesting. May they not be unprofitable.

"On Monday evening I delivered a lecture on temperance at Frankfort. Feel very dull and stupid to-day—the consequence, perhaps, of reaction after unusual excitement.

"June 7th.—Reached home yesterday, after an absence of nearly three weeks, attending Synod at Xenia, Ohio. The meeting was a very pleasant one—quite harmonious—more so than any meeting that has taken place for many years. 'How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' A considerable amount of business was accomplished, and more left undone from want of time.

"During my absence, one of the aged members of my flock—Mrs. Jane M'Laren—entered into rest. Trust her departure has to her been gain. Propose to preach to-morrow on 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.' I feel, however, very deeply, my insufficiency to do the subject justice. Lord, be thou my sufficiency—my stay and strength!

"July 10th.—A dark, gloomy day! A fit emblem of my mind! For a considerable time I have been walking in darkness, and have had no light—no comfort or satisfaction in divine things. My mind has been harassed with doubts and difficulties in regard to the word of God, and oppressed with a languor and reckless laziness, which wholly unfit me for study. In this last trouble, my body also partakes.\* As a means of relief, I propose to take a trip, next week, to Cape May. It has been recommended to me, and I hope it may be of use. Still I feel reluctant to leave my congregation. May I not be charged with leaving my post, and setting pleasure before duty? But, on the other hand, may not the recreation be of use, in reviving my exhausted energies, and thus render me more useful when I return? It is on this last supposition that I have decided to go. If I have erred, may the Head of the church look in mercy on me, and forgive, and overrule my fault for good. I would desire to seek the blessing of God on the adventure; feeling that, without it, no good, but much evil, will be the result. If I know my

\* The truth probably was that the state of his body was the source of his mental trouble.

own heart, I think I can say that my chief object in going is to render myself more vigorous and active in my Master's work. May the good Shepherd of Israel watch over my, (or rather *His*) flock, during my absence, and at all times; for without His pastoral care, how utterly vain is mine!

"Aug. 11th.—Had, in general, a pleasant journey east, and returned at the appointed time, safely, and, I think, perhaps somewhat recruited in health and spirits. There was not, however, sufficient time to make a fair experiment of the advantages of sea-bathing. We were detained nearly a week, on the way to Philadelphia, in consequence of a flood, which had occurred shortly before in the mountains, and had destroyed a considerable portion of the road. I remained at Cape Island only about seven days. I enjoyed the bathing very much, but found the want of employment rather irksome. I have much reason for gratitude to the kind Providence which watched over me through dangers seen and unseen—preserved me safely, and brought me again in peace to my congregation and my home. May I have grace to exercise and manifest a thankful spirit.

"Sept. 16th.—Our congregation is again, in the inscrutable providence of God, involved in affliction. The typhoid fever and dysentery—the diseases which, last fall, proved so fatal amongst us—have again broken out with considerable violence. One of our families already has been sorely afflicted. Mr. Andrew Purdy, one of our ruling elders, died this morning. This is the third elder, and the ninth member, we have lost during the year! Truly we are made to drink the wine of astonishment! How ought I to interpret these events? I feel sometimes inclined to regard them as the expressions of God's disapprobation of my settlement here. Ever since I came, we have had sickness and death almost all the time. Lord, teach me to understand the operations of thy hand! One thing, at least, I may learn—human frailty, and my own mortality. Enable me, O God, in view of these providences, so to number my days that I may apply my heart to wisdom!

"Nov. 24th.—Quite a break in my diary! The fact

is, I have but little to write, and am very lazy about it. Last week I began my second course of family visitation. Visited the western side of the congregation, with elders Purdy and Wilson. Found the people generally at home, and was well satisfied with their examination. I trust the work of grace is advancing among them generally. In some instances, I thought I could discern a decided improvement since our last visitation. This is encouraging. May the God of all grace continue and complete His own work.

“Yesterday I preached on Judges v. 23. ‘Cursè ye Meroz,’ &c.—A very solemn and alarming text. Had considerable freedom during the discourse, but was somewhat oppressed afterwards with the thought that perhaps I had spoken with too much bitterness. How difficult it is to speak on such subjects with that tenderness and affectionateness of manner which always becomes us in addressing fellow-sinners!

“The present will be a busy week with me, if I attend to its duties rightly. To-morrow, I have an appointment to visit some eight or ten families, in company with Elder Maginnis. Thursday is the State Thanksgiving day, and we expect to observe it. This will put a considerable addition of labour upon me—but ‘as my day, so shall my strength be,’—truly a precious promise.

“Dec. 22d.—Yesterday was our communion Sabbath. The occasion throughout has been at least ordinarily comfortable, and, I trust, profitable. The weather has been very cold, and this circumstance kept many of our members at home. Those who were out, however, were, I think, well entertained. Our Fast was on Friday. Alex. Rankin preached. His subject was Ps. lxvi. 18. ‘If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.’ A very appropriate subject, and a good discourse. R. J. Hammond preached on the remaining days of the occasion. . . . His subjects were very suitable and well discussed. I trust the souls of many were edified, as well as comforted, by the exercises throughout. Only one additional member was received on this occasion. Our prospects, in this respect, are very discouraging. ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!’

"Jan. 12th, 1852.—Entered upon a new year. How constantly our time rolls on! Day succeeds day, and year follows year, by a succession which knows no interruption; and each, in its turn, brings us still nearer to the judgment-bar. O that I were properly impressed with a sense of this solemn fact! What an effect should it produce in exciting to diligence, activity, and earnestness in the Master's work!

"The two weeks just passed I have been spending in visiting. The first week I visited some friends in Wheeling—the second, in Washington and Canonsburg. Both passed very pleasantly. Yet I fear the time was not as profitably spent as it might have been. The dissipation of mind incident to such employment is by no means favourable either to study or piety.

"Still it is pleasant to meet occasionally with friends, and enjoy their fellowship. It has a tendency—if rightly improved—to cultivate and develop some of the better and finer feelings of our nature. My visits, however, in future, must not be so long continued.

"Yesterday I exchanged with Brother Rankin. I have now been two Sabbaths absent from home in succession."

The following—the *last* entry in his journal—was written on the day previous to that on which he took sick.

"Jan. 19th,—A very cold day.—The ground covered with snow. The winter, thus far, has been colder than for many seasons previous; and still there is no prospect of immediate abatement.

"Yesterday was quite stormy—the snow falling and the wind blowing all day. This rendered our attendance at church somewhat thin. Still there was a respectable audience. I preached on 1 Tim. vi. 6.—'Godliness with contentment is great gain.' A fine subject, and specially appropriate to this community at this time. The whole neighbourhood seems to be going wild on the subject of going to California. Several young men have already gone, and a number more are preparing to follow. Some of my people, in common with others, it is said, have taken the 'Gold Fever.'



“Under such circumstances, I felt it to be my duty to lift a warning voice. Accordingly, I did so, on the above-mentioned text. Whether it will have the desired effect or not, I know not. But I do hope it will cause some at least to pause and reflect.

“What a soul-ruining evil this ‘love of money’ is! May it be restrained and suppressed here by the better principles of piety.”

Thus ends this brief, impressive record! Thus did this young soldier of Christ die at his post, leaving behind him his testimony to the vanity of earth, and the unspeakable preciousness of those heavenly joys, of which, we feel assured, he is now partaking!

May this record of his hopes and fears—his doubts and discouragements—his faith and his works—be abundantly blessed to many of those who are left behind. Much encouragement may be derived from observing these foot-prints of a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus:—

“Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Toiling o’er life’s solemn main—  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.”

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## CHAPTER V.

### HIS LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

ON Tuesday, Jan. 20th, 1852, Mr. Hanna had a severe attack of bilious colic. He had, several times previously, been similarly affected, and, consequently, was not specially alarmed. After the administration of some of the usual remedies, the disease appeared to be arrested, and on Thursday, he thought he would be able to preach on the ensuing Sabbath. But on Friday he became worse. The disease was now changed to enteritis, (inflammation of the bowels,) and was attended with some alarming symptoms. On Sabbath, the 25th, his relations were summoned, and his father, mother, and one of his sisters arrived on Monday evening; and shortly afterwards, Rev. Mr. Lee, his intimate friend, and the writer, who

both remained with him throughout his illness. The rest of the family arrived on Saturday morning. The disease still advanced, and the unfavourable symptoms continued, almost entirely banishing hope from the anxious breasts of those who were with him.

On Sabbath, Feb. 1st, a favourable change appeared to take place. The swelling and tenseness in the abdomen subsided rapidly; he appeared to be more easy and tranquil, and hope began to dawn in the hearts of his friends.

On Monday he appeared so much better, and his physicians appeared so much encouraged, that his father, who had important business requiring his attention in Washington, went home, together with the younger members of the family, leaving Mrs. Hanna and the eldest daughter, and also a younger son, who was to carry intelligence to him, should any unfavourable change occur.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, he still appeared to be recovering, and on the latter day, his brother returned home, to gladden the hearts of his friends with the welcome news. But alas! all these fond hopes were doomed to disappointment.

This favourable state of things continued until Wednesday night, when he appeared to be suffering much pain; and his attendants being somewhat alarmed, the physician was summoned. On his arrival he pronounced him to be sinking very rapidly. Stimulants were resorted to, but without avail; he continued to sink, and on Thursday morning, Feb. 5th, a little before eight o'clock, his spirit took its flight.

Nothing that love, friendship, or skill could do, was neglected. Kind friends were ever at his side, ready and anxious to do every thing in their power to alleviate his pain, and to preserve so precious a life. But the sovereign will of Him who "doeth all things well" was against them. The appointed time had come,—the silver cord was loosed—the golden bowl was broken.

It is extremely difficult to give a satisfactory account of the exercises of Mr. Hanna's mind in his last illness. During the greater part of the time he was very low, and unable to converse, for any length of time, with those

around him; and either from the effects of medicine, or from the disease itself, his mind was much disturbed. Some of the symptoms attending his disease were of the typhoid character; and, as is well known, in this case—although the mind be not decidedly affected—its condition is such as to preclude its active exercise. This was, to some extent, the case with Mr. Hanna. He endeavoured to fix his mind, and to meditate on religious subjects; and his occasional failure in these efforts was, to him, a source of much perplexity. Of this he often spoke to those around him.

But let us remember it is not so much in the *death*, as in the *life* of the Christian, that we must look for the evidences of his union to Christ. Death will frighten many a bad man into an apparent compliance with the will of God. The sad relapse of many who, when brought near to the gate of death, gave much evidence of submission to God's will, and of hope in his mercy, proves this to be the case. Very forcible was the question of him who, on hearing some one inquire how another had *died*, asked—"How did he *live*?"

It is then principally to the history of our brother's *life* in the world that we must look for the grounds of our hope concerning his present state. Those who knew him need ask for nothing more. But, in addition to this, in his last illness, even under the circumstances to which we have alluded, we find many things to confirm our hope, and abundant ground to believe that, as for him to *live* was *Christ*, so to *die* was *gain*.

Even the wanderings of his mind were towards religious things; and his thoughts could at any time be recalled by the introduction of a religious subject. The suggestion of some passage of Scripture suitable to his condition, would immediately fix his attention, and generally call forth some sign of assent to its beauty and sweetness, and some evidence of the comfort it afforded him.

On Sabbath evening, Jan. 25th, the physician informed him that his case was one, the result of which was very doubtful. He was, at first, much affected by the intelligence. He addressed Rev. Mr. Rankin, for whom he had sent, and conversed, for some time, with him, on the

solemn event in prospect. He acknowledged that he deeply felt his imperfection in holiness; "but," said he, "God can, in a moment, make his work perfect in me." He asked Mr. R. if he thought it presumptuous in him to speak thus? He, of course, replied in the negative. He then requested all who were present to retire, as he wished to be left, for some time, alone. When they returned to the room, they found him calm and composed. The struggle was over, and by God's strengthening grace, he was now prepared to meet death without fear.

Many of his brethren in the ministry—both of his own, and other denominations—visited him during his illness; and when not unusually low or exhausted, he requested them to engage in prayer; and however restless or uneasy he had been, he invariably folded his arms across his breast, and listened with composure and fixed attention, while they were thus employed, and generally remained thus for some moments afterwards, apparently engaged in communion with God.

On one occasion, a friend, at his request, read to him the 103d Psalm, the sweet truths of which he appeared to receive with peculiar delight, and immediately asked Rev. Mr. Rankin, who was present, to pray with him.

Shortly afterwards, when the writer was alone with him, he heard him repeat, in a feeble and broken voice, the last verse of the 39th Psalm:

"O spare thou me, that I my strength  
Recover may again;  
Before from hence I do depart,  
And here no more remain."

His father, and others who were with him, embraced every opportunity to convey comfort to his mind, from the word of God, and frequently engaged in prayer with him. He always received these attentions, and even the smallest services rendered him by his friends, with much pleasure and gratitude. He hardly ever received even a cup of cold water without an expression of thankfulness, and through the whole of his severe and painful illness, manifested the same meek and amiable disposition which so adorned his life.

He never appeared to cherish strong hopes of his re-

covery. This was the case, even when those who were with him, and watching the progress of his disease with anxious hearts, were most encouraged. He never would say that he felt himself much better; and any hopes that he did express seem to have been founded mainly on the encouraging assurances of his physicians and friends.

On one occasion, when his mind was clouded, and appeared to be much disturbed, a brother who was present, in order to recall his wandering thoughts, asked him if he remembered the last subject on which he had preached. He replied—"O yes!—'Godliness with contentment is great gain'"—and added—"you were with me when I wrote it.—That was the last sermon I preached, and it may be the last I ever will preach."—He also expressed his conviction that—"for him to depart and be with Christ, was far better"—and, in reply to a question proposed to him, he said—"he was not afraid to die, if that should prove to be the will of God."

On Wednesday night, after the doctor had pronounced him to be sinking, and had left the room for a few minutes, he asked—"What does the doctor say of the system?"—The physician, (Dr. Wilson) was then called to make his report, and addressed him thus:—"Mr. Hanna, I don't wish to deceive you—you are sinking—and if the brandy does not revive you, I can do no more for you." He received the announcement with perfect composure.

It being now apparent that the end was near, and he himself having expressed his consciousness of this, his mother approached, and said—"Thomas, the doctors have done all in their power. We have been engaged in prayer for your life—your congregation and friends are unwilling to give you up—but it is now evident that God's will and our will are not the same. We must bow to God, and I hope you will now give yourself up to Him."—She then added, "Your father gave you, when a child, to God." "Yes," he replied, "and I gave myself to Him—but that will avail nothing *now*. I must depend on the righteousness of Christ." She then asked him what were his favourite Psalms? He answered, "the 23d, 25th, 103d, and many others." Shortly afterwards he

began the 23d Psalm, in the metre version; but when he had repeated a few verses, his voice failed him, and it had to be finished by another.

Some time after this, when his mind was wandering, he imagined himself surrounded by the members of his session—called in the applicants for membership in the church, and addressed them in the usual way. Then—apparently overcome by exhaustion—he remained, for some time, perfectly quiet; when he suddenly aroused, and, addressing those around him, delivered what was supposed to be the concluding exhortation of a discourse—whether one he had formerly preached, or original with him at the time, it is impossible to tell. However this may be, it was truly eloquent and thrilling. He spoke in a loud, clear voice, and for several minutes.

It is with deep regret we add that none who were present can remember his words, so as to give any satisfactory account of them. They would have formed a suitable conclusion to a discourse on the words—“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” He spoke of the various schemes devised by men, in the pursuit of happiness—of the vain dreams of the ancient philosophers—and remarked that all these things were vain—that there was just the *one thing*. “My friends,” said he, “the hour is coming to each one of you, when neither human learning—philosophy—nor any thing else, will sustain the soul—but an interest in Jesus.”

This is all that can be remembered by those who heard him. Their minds were so much confused and excited at the time, that it was impossible to retain a distinct recollection of what passed.

Rev. Mr. Brownlee, at his request, engaged in prayer with him, a short time before his departure. He prayed that all his enemies might now be kept at a distance, and that he might have a peaceful passage into the other world. This prayer, we think, was answered.

A few moments before he died, he extended his hands to those around him, exclaiming, “I must bid you all farewell”—and then folding his arms upon his breast—in the attitude which he had formerly assumed in prayer—without a groan or struggle, surrendered his spirit to the God who gave it, and slept in Jesus.

At the time of his death, none of the family were present, but his mother and eldest sister. As soon as it became evident that he was sinking, messengers were despatched to his father. He, and those of the family who were in Washington, arrived in the evening, and were not informed of the sad event until they reached the house. His elder brother, residing near Cadiz, O., and the only other member of the family, arrived the next day, while the people were assembling for the funeral.

On Friday afternoon, his remains were, at the earnest request of his people, committed to the dust, in the graveyard at Clinton. This beautiful spot immediately adjoins the church, and is surrounded by a grove of large, majestic trees, which give a wild, romantic beauty to the scene. There lies that good old father in Israel, Rev. William Wilson, the first pastor of the congregation—there are the remains of three of the elders who, a few months before, preceded their pastor to their rest—there sleep the bodies of many of God's saints—and there we buried Thomas Hanna.

His body was followed to the grave by a long procession of mourning relatives and friends. Fourteen of his ministerial brethren, of different denominations, were present. Religious services were conducted by Rev. Dr. Anderson and Rev. Mr. Murray.

The people of the congregation were deeply attached to their pastor. The family of Mr. William Wilson, in whose house he died, were unremitting in their attentions. They could not have shown more interest in his case had he been, in reality, one of the family. Nor was this a singular instance. During his illness, the members of his congregation were constantly calling to inquire for him, and seemed anxious to be permitted, in some way, to manifest their love. Those who were admitted to his presence could not restrain their grief, and often were so much affected as scarcely to be able to speak. And when the news went forth that he was *dead*, the whole neighbourhood was a scene of mourning.

It was the mournful duty of the writer to preach to this afflicted congregation on the Sabbath after their sad bereavement. And it was truly an affecting scene. Their

grief was not only visible, but audible, and such as to lead all who witnessed it to say, Behold how they loved him!

His death is truly a heavy—a stunning blow. It seems almost impossible to realize it—that he is actually gone—he whose cheerful countenance was so lately seen, and the kind accents of whose voice so lately heard amongst us. That he should be thus taken away, in the morning of life, and in the very beginning of a useful career—that the church should be deprived of so useful a member, and so bright an ornament—is a mystery too deep for us to fathom. Yet we know that it is right. This was all determined in the counsels of eternity, and brought about by the providence of an all-wise God. This event is but a link in that chain of events, the whole of which will never be visible to us, until the shadows of time shall be dissipated by the glorious light which shall issue from the throne of God, when time shall be no more.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### HIS PERSONAL AND MINISTERIAL CHARACTER.

IN the character of Mr. Hanna were blended many excellencies not usually combined in the same person. It was, undoubtedly, the grace of God that united in him these apparently opposite traits, and kept each in its proper place. Pre-eminent among these, and the source of them all, was

### HIS PIETY.

There is reason to believe that his thoughts were very early directed to religious things, and that, even in his childhood, divine grace was exerting over him a controlling influence. He himself remarked to a friend, that if he was a child of God, he must have been so from a very early age, for he could not remember when the change took place. From his earliest infancy, he was always amiable and pleasant in his disposition—easily controlled—a most affectionate and obedient son—and a particular favourite in the family. He seemed always to take a pe-



culiar delight in serious conversation, and was often making inquiries on religious subjects.

During the summer of 1847, when an alarming and fatal epidemic prevailed at Cadiz, and when, among many others, his beloved and pious mother was taken away, he was at home, and was himself ill, for about two weeks, with the same fever. This, together with the death of his mother—much endeared to him, and to all the family—seemed to make a very strong impression on his mind. His father says—“His room was up stairs, and he would often come down to my study, and sit with me for hours, conversing on religious subjects. Indeed his company and conversation were a great comfort to me under my bereavement.”—This affliction had, to all appearance, a happy effect, in turning his heart more decidedly towards God and heavenly things.

It had long been his habit to read a portion of Scripture regularly, every morning and evening, in his secret retirement. This his father recommended to him when young; and it was a practice which, in connexion with secret prayer, we have abundant reason to believe he followed strictly through life. He was, indeed, peculiarly conscientious in attending to the secret exercises of religion, both at home and abroad.

We need only refer, in proof of his piety, to his diary, which, as we have already remarked, was evidently not written with any view to its publication. It presents, we have every reason to believe, a sincere and faithful statement of the exercises of his mind, both with regard to his own heart, and with respect to his duties as a minister of Christ, during the short period of his pastoral labours in Clinton.

Contemplate, for a moment, that solemn scene recorded in the commencement of his journal. Behold him, in his secret retirement, on his knees before God—ready to sink under a sense of the responsibilities about to be laid upon him; yet grasping the promises of God, and in humble dependence on His promised grace, taking upon him those solemn vows. This was a scene which the angels might contemplate with a holy joy. And while we look on it as an evidence of his devotion to God, may we

not also regard it as a solemn reproof to those who *carelessly* assume this sacred, awful trust?

We might also refer to the extracts we have given from his letters, and to the exercises of his mind on his death-bed. But we think this unnecessary. The careful reader cannot resist the impression they are calculated to produce—that he was a true child of God, and eminently distinguished for his PIETY.

#### HIS MODESTY.

This was a trait in his character well known and often remarked by all his acquaintances. Although he possessed, to so great an extent, the esteem and respect of others, he was never forward or presuming, but was always of a modest and retiring disposition. While his worth and talents were acknowledged by all, he himself seemed to be unconscious of them. Perhaps we may see here one reason of his universal popularity. He was so modest and humble, and so free from an ambitious or aspiring spirit, that his superior abilities never excited the envy of those who were not so highly gifted. His amiable disposition disarmed all malice, and made him every where a welcome guest, at the family fire-side, and in the social circle.

But, in connexion with his modesty and humility, we must notice also

#### HIS CONSCIENTIOUSNESS.

Between these two qualities there seemed to be a constant struggle—the one inclining him to retire within himself—the other impelling him to activity. All that was necessary to bring him forward, was a sense of duty. This is happily illustrated by a simple incident which occurred during his last illness, and which would perhaps, otherwise, be undeserving of notice. At one time, his mind was unusually disturbed; he was very restless, and it was almost impossible to persuade him to remain in bed. Various measures were resorted to, without success. At last some one thoughtlessly remarked, “it is not *right*.”

This, at once, arrested his attention. He seemed instinctively to shrink from the idea of doing any thing

wrong, and immediately yielded to the wishes of his attendants.

This strict adherence to what appeared to him to be duty, was also eminently characteristic of the whole course of his ministry. In his preparation for the pulpit, in his preaching, in family visitation and pastoral examination, in visiting the sick and afflicted, and in private admonitions and exhortations to the members of his charge, his faithfulness and diligence were truly exemplary.

We see this trait also manifested in many passages in his letters, and in his private journal. His language seems always to have been, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" We would only mention, as an example, the entry in his diary, dated July 10th, 1851, and relating to his proposed trip to Cape May. He seems to have been unwilling to go, until convinced that it was his *duty*, and that he was actuated by proper motives. And it was not until after long and serious deliberation and frequent consultations with his friends, and with the elders and other members of his congregation, that he decided to leave them.

Mr. Hanna was also distinguished, as none who knew him will deny—by

#### INGENUOUSNESS AND CANDOUR.

There was, in his disposition, no appearance of reserve, except such as prudence required. He was far removed from any thing like cunning or duplicity. On the contrary, his manner was always characterized by sincerity and frankness, and by a childlike simplicity of heart—that quality which our Saviour so highly commends. This trait was, of course, more especially observed by his intimate friends, to whom he would speak in the most free and unreserved manner of his thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

#### AS A MEMBER OF SOCIETY

His intercourse with others was always marked by kindness and amiability. He had a good report of those who are without. He was a living epistle, known and read of all men; and by the excellencies which adorned his personal character, did much to commend to others the gospel which he believed and professed. His popularity

was, by no means, confined to the members of his own congregation; his excellencies were known and appreciated by the members of other churches, and by numbers who made no profession of religion at all. On some of this latter class his death seemed to make a deep impression, and his influence on them, we trust, will not be lost. We hope that the bread which he has here cast upon the waters will be found again, after many days.

His talents also rendered him a useful member of society. He took an active part in all measures designed to promote the public good. He was an able advocate of the cause of temperance, and was frequently called on to deliver addresses on this subject. At the time of his death, he had an appointment to address the temperance society at Clinton, at their next meeting. His humanity and generous feelings, combined with his sense of right, led him to take an active part in opposition to the system of American slavery; though in this, as in every thing else, his "moderation" was known. He drew up the resolutions of the Chartiers presbytery, in relation to the fugitive slave bill; which were adopted by many other presbyteries and public meetings, as the expression of their sentiments, and which were extensively copied into the public papers. One of the sermons included in this volume—on Matt. xxii. 21,—will give the reader an idea of his sentiments on this subject.

Having thus briefly noticed some things in relation to the personal character of Mr. Hanna, we would endeavour to give some idea of his excellence as a minister of the gospel.

#### AS A PREACHER

He had few equals. He was peculiarly acceptable to the people of his charge, and they were much disturbed by frequent rumours of movements in other quarters of the church, for his removal from their midst. It is but justice to say, however, that these movements were neither originated nor countenanced by *him*. They were solely owing to his great popularity wherever he was known.

His very personal appearance was prepossessing. He was rather tall and slender, and easy and graceful in his manners. He had a bright, intelligent, and expressive

eye, and his winning countenance was a true index to the goodness of his heart.

His style was chaste, clear, and beautiful—his thoughts vigorous, and often very striking—and his manner forcible, earnest, and impressive. His discourses will speak for themselves; but types and paper cannot convey them to the mind with the same impressiveness which they had when coming from his lips. It is also much to be regretted that his applications, which were often the most impressive part of his sermons, although carefully prepared, were never written in full; they embrace only the main points by which his remarks were guided. This is a deficiency which will be observed in those discourses which are here given to the public. His concluding exhortations were generally brought home very closely to the consciences of his hearers, and delivered with an affectionate earnestness and solemnity of manner which was calculated to add much to their effect.

No one who heard him speak from the pulpit, or at the sacramental table, could doubt his sincerity and earnestness in all that he said. He manifested, in his preaching, an acquaintance with human nature, which could only have been acquired by the diligent and prayerful study of his own heart in connexion with the word of God.

#### AS A PASTOR,

He was diligent, and unremitting in all his duties. During the short period of his settlement at Clinton, he had, in his ministerial capacity, twice visited the families of his congregation. He had established a Bible class, for the younger members of his charge, to which he attended personally, on the Sabbath morning. A Sabbath school was also conducted by some of the members, under his supervision; and he had also formed plans for the future, which, had his life been spared, were calculated greatly to increase his usefulness.

We recognise the hand of Providence, in a remarkable manner, calling him, in the course of his ministry, to witness so much affliction. Few, so young and inexperienced, have passed through so many trying scenes. We have already alluded to his personal and family afflictions

at Cadiz, and the influence which they appear to have had on his mind. We have also noticed the prevalence of the cholera in New York, during the time of his mission there. And during a great part of the time that he was settled at Clinton, a fatal epidemic was prevailing among his people, by which three of the elders and many of the members of his congregation were taken away, and, in two instances, the families entirely broken up. The design of Providence, in this, seems to have been to familiarize him with scenes of suffering and death, that his mind might be deeply impressed with a sense of his own mortality, and that he might be prepared for the solemn event so near at hand. Accordingly, we find, in his journal, and in his sermons, frequent allusions to the shortness and uncertainty of life; showing that this was a subject that engaged much of his attention.

Nor can we omit here to notice his faithful attentions to those of his people, and to others also, who were brought low by the mighty hand of God. He was ever to be found at the pillow of the sick and the dying, to administer the consolations of the gospel, to fix their faith on the promises, and to prepare the parting soul to meet its God. This is a part of the ministerial office from which many shrink with fear; but it was a duty peculiarly pleasant to him. A few days before he took sick, he remarked to one of his brethren, that he had much satisfaction in visiting and conversing with the sick in his congregation.

His many acts of kindness to them will not be soon forgotten. Perhaps nothing tended so much to endear him to his people, and to make his memory precious among them, as his presence with them, and the kindness and faithfulness with which he discharged his duty to them, in their time of darkness and distress.

Long will they remember his works of faith and labours of love. They have agreed to erect a monument over his grave; but he himself has left, in their hearts, a monument more enduring than brass or marble, "The memory of the just is blessed."

"Help, Lord! for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men?"

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# SERMONS.

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# SERMONS

OF

## REV. THOMAS B. HANNA.

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### SERMON I.

#### SOWING THE WIND, AND ITS RESULT.

HOS. VIII. 7. "*They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.*"

THERE is perhaps no truth more distinctly exhibited in the Scriptures than that there is an intimate connexion and correspondence between the character and conduct of men here, and the destinies which await them hereafter. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is a law in the government of God which is applicable, no less to the moral, than to the natural world. The great Ruler of the universe, in his dealings with the children of men, has adopted a regular system of causes and effects, or of means and ends, in accordance with which, he uniformly acts, and from which we have no reason to anticipate that he will, in any instance, depart. Under God, therefore, the destiny of each individual is at his own disposal; and, according to the means which he adopts, or the course of life which he pursues, will be the nature of that destiny. "They that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, shall reap the same." "He that soweth iniquity, shall reap vanity." And, in all instances, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall, of the flesh, reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall, of the Spirit, reap life everlasting." We are not unmindful here of the fact, that the sinner, in himself, is dead and helpless, and, consequently, can efficiently do nothing toward the accomplishment of his own salvation. We recognise, and would hold forth, with all the prominence

its importance demands, the fact that the blessing of God and his co-operating power are essential to the sinner's success in any effort which he may make. Without these, however good the seed sown may be, it must necessarily be unproductive. Yet it is, at the same time, to be observed that the blessing of God and his co-operating power are secured to those who embrace and rightly employ the means of his appointment. And such only are authorized to expect them. The husbandman, who withholds the seed from the earth, cannot expect that the God of providence will send him a harvest. Nor can he, who sows inferior grain, expect to reap fruit of any better character. And just so it is in God's moral government. He who would reap the rich harvest of a blessed immortality, must here plant and cultivate the seeds of holiness. And he, on the other hand, who spends the time of preparation allotted to him here, in sowing to the flesh, and in pursuing the vanities and follies of the world, can expect to reap nothing but the native results of such a life,—corruption and death.

This important truth is clearly brought to our view in the passage which we have read as the subject of some remarks. The prophet is addressing the apostate Israelites, and severely rebuking them for having forsaken God and followed idols. After describing the nature of their sin and its various aggravations, he proceeds to point out to them the consequences which this conduct would bring upon them. They could not expect that they would be permitted to pursue such a course with impunity. The anger of God was aroused; nor could it be appeased without the infliction of such judgment upon them as would practically convince them that it was indeed an evil and a bitter thing that they had forsaken the Lord their God. The prophet, therefore, warns them that judgments were in prospect—judgments, deep, dark, and overwhelming—and of such a character, moreover, that they could not fail to recognise them as the direct and natural results of their sins. “They have sown the wind,—and they shall reap the whirlwind.” The language of our text, however, need not be confined to the occasion on which it was first announced. It is plainly a general proposition, which is just as true in reference to the mass

of mankind now, as it was, formerly, in reference to the Jews. There are multitudes, at the present day, of whom it may, with all propriety, be said, "they have sown the wind." And the uniform, unchanging nature of God's moral government assures us that their destiny will be the same with that of similar characters in former times,—*"They shall reap the whirlwind."* All we design is to notice,

I. Some characters or classes of persons who may be said to sow the wind.

II. The result, or consequences of such conduct.

I. Some characters to whom the description of the text applies. To *"sow the wind"* is a proverbial expression for *labouring in vain*. It denotes, in general, a course of conduct which is *light and unsubstantial in its nature*, and which, in consequence, is *entirely unproductive of good results*. † It is applied, by the prophet, in our text, to the conduct of the Jews in *worshipping idols*. These idols being, in their nature, *nothing*,—possessing no existence or character, except in the diseased imaginations of their deluded worshippers,—all the devotion manifested by the Jews in their service, was evidently just equivalent to *sowing the wind*. It was but a *wasting of their energies* in a service which *could, by no possibility, render them a profitable return*. And such is the uniform character of the service, whatever particular form it may assume. Of all the workers of iniquity—of all who forsake the service of the living God, and follow after the vanities and vices of the world, it may be truly said, *"they have sown the wind."* We specify a few instances, by way of illustration.

1. *The trifler*. A large portion of the human family seem to live without an *object* or an *aim*. Possessed of no sense of responsibility to God for the opportunities and privileges which they enjoy—having no proper sense of the value or importance of *life*, or of the high and noble objects to which it may, and should be devoted—their only effort seems to be, to spend their days without exertion and without annoyance. Their views of life seem to rise no higher than the vain conceit that it is a space of time which, somehow, must be whiled away; and the only inquiry, with them, is, How may this be done so as

to require the least exertion, and afford the greatest ease? And, having settled this important point, they set themselves about the task of killing time, with a diligence and energy of purpose, worthy of a better cause. Every possible device, by which the body or mind may be temporarily employed, without effecting any useful purpose, is diligently sought, and eagerly embraced. Any employment, requiring effort, either of body or of mind, they cordially abhor. Their only object is to while away the heavy hours which hang upon their hands, or, at most, to procure for themselves a present ease or sensual pleasure. Hence their employments are, uniformly, of the lightest and most unsubstantial character. Go with them to their private retirement, and, could you read their secret thoughts, you would find them ever of the most trifling character. Their silly pleasures—the last new novel—the fashions of the day—the scandal of the neighbourhood—these and other kindred topics form the whole subject of their meditations. Serious or solemn thought scarcely ever enters their minds, or, if it does, it is speedily banished, as something which might produce anxiety, and mar their peace. Follow such individuals out into the world—see the kind of society they select—listen to the kind of conversation by which they seek to entertain others, and are themselves entertained—a continual round of silly nothings, about, if it were possible, still sillier topics. And then the round of amusements—the ball-room, the theatre, and the bar-room, are the chief places of their resort. Thus their life is a continual round of the veriest trifling. Utterly neglecting every useful or substantial pursuit, they are spending all their energies in the pursuit of that which is, not merely comparatively, but absolutely, *nothing*—a pursuit which only serves to waste away the precious hours of their fleeting life, and to dissipate their souls, and ripen them for ruin. Pursuing trifles “light as air,” they not only lose all real good, but are led on, by their influence, to their own destruction.

That there are individuals of the character we have been describing, we need not stay to prove. The world is full of examples. We have only to look around us, and every where we may behold them. Perhaps, indeed, if we looked into our own hearts with a strict and impar-

tial scrutiny, we might find some traits of this character there. And may we not, with all propriety, apply, to this character, the description of the text? Do not such persons, manifestly, "*sow the wind?*" Light, trifling as the air, are their pursuits, and equally unproductive, will they always be, of good results. Just with as much reason, might an individual expect a bountiful harvest of the fruits of the earth, from the mere sowing of *wind*, as the busy trifler expect any good or useful results to flow from his wasted life.

2. *The mere seeker of pleasure.* This character differs from the former chiefly in the manner in which he pursues his object. The trifler is a seeker of pleasure, yet such is the frivolity or lightness of his character, that he is incapable of making, even it, a steady object of pursuit. The character to which we now refer, however, is one who makes earthly pleasure the great object of his life, and sets about the pursuit of it with the systematic endeavour to make every thing else subservient to its attainment. This is also a character which is, by no means, rare or unfrequent in the world. "Who will show us any good?" is the great inquiry with a large portion of the human family. They look on the things of the world as the only real or substantial sources of enjoyment, and, accordingly, make them the supreme and only object of their pursuit. Mistaking the true object of life, they look on it, simply, as a space of time allotted to them, to spend in the gratification of their carnal natures. To this object, accordingly, they devote their lives; and every means, having a tendency, in their estimation, to increase the amount of their earthly gratifications, is diligently employed. They live in a continual round of excitement, flying from one scene of sensuality and dissipation to another, and never contented, except in the midst of their sensual revelries. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," in a greater or less degree of refinement, is the motto of their lives. They realize or appreciate no higher object in life. The glory of God, the welfare of their souls, and the good of their fellow-men, are, to such persons, unintelligible terms. Base, blinded selfishness characterizes all their motives, and rules all

their conduct. They live only that they may gratify their appetites, and lusts, and passions; and, beyond this, they are as insensible to the influence of motives, as though they were really destitute of souls. How many illustrations of this class of characters might we cite from the world around us! Every one is familiar with some such, men who live, apparently, only that they may gratify the promptings of their baser natures, and that they may revel in a continual enjoyment of the pleasures of sense.

And may not such individuals be justly said to "*sow the wind?*" What are all the pleasures of sense but airy trifles, unsubstantial nothings, deluding their votaries, for a time, with a seeming form, and then vanishing away? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" is the testimony of one who spoke, not only from a personal and dearly bought experience, but also by inspiration of God.

3. *The worldling.* The lovers of the present world seem to themselves, doubtless, to be following something real and substantial. They will heartily agree with us in pronouncing the course of the trifler, and the seeker of pleasure, a sowing the wind. They will cordially admit that such courses of conduct are entirely unprofitable, and, in the end, pernicious. Yet they imagine that *their* pursuits are essentially different from these. They regard the riches of the world as constituting a real and substantial possession. They hope to obtain, by them, not a momentary gratification, but solid and lasting benefits. They promise to themselves the acquisition of ease, affluence, and respect. And, looking upon these things as permanent and substantial advantages, they imagine that they are sowing good seed, which may be expected to bring forth substantial fruit. But whatever superiority, in this respect, may be allotted to the industrious seeker of the world, over the reckless trifler or pleasure-seeker, the former cannot be excluded from the number of those who are *sowing the wind*. For, what are the riches of the world, but light, temporary vanities? They possess no intrinsic or essential worth. They may, indeed, secure to their possessor many temporal advantages; yet they cannot confer any permanent or lasting benefits. They may secure, to their possessor, a position



of ease, honour, and influence in the world; yet how soon may all these advantages, with the riches that procured them, be wrested from him, and he sent, penniless and unhonoured, to wander through the world! No dependence can be placed upon their continuance. They may, in a moment, make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle toward heaven. Or, just at the moment when the possessor has attained the height of his desires, and is revelling in the consciousness of his affluence, the summons of death may be put into his hands, and with, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee," all his dreams of happiness may suddenly be blasted. And when that event transpires—when the soul is called to appear at the judgment-bar, and receive the sentence which shall fix its final doom, of what avail will all the treasure, which the labours of a life may have accumulated, then be to the trembling sinner? The rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, while here, finds, to his unspeakable horror then, if he possess no other treasure, that all his wealth only adds to the intensity of his torment.

If such then be the true character of earthly riches,—if the advantages which they secure are all but momentary and unsubstantial—if they are all thus fleeting and transient, and incapable of securing our future happiness—may not that man who makes the pursuit of wealth the supreme object of his life, be appropriately said to *sow the wind*? And yet how many are there of this character, even among those who profess the cause of Christ!—Men, whose very souls seem to be bound up in the pursuit of gold. They labour late and early—denying themselves even the comforts of life—employing all their time in labour, and appropriating none to mental or moral culture. And with what tenacity do such men cling to the treasures already acquired! God may tell them repeatedly that the silver and the gold are His—that he has committed this wealth to them as stewards, and would have them yield it back at his calls,—and yet they disregard his voice. He may ask a portion to feed the poor—to send the gospel to the heathen—to spread His cause—but they turn a deaf ear to his calls, and press their idols more closely to their souls. Surely, such may, most

emphatically, be said to *sow the wind*. They are pursuing a course which shall not only prove unproductive of good to them, but which will finally involve them in the whirlwind of God's wrath.

4. *The aspirant for popular applause.* There are many who look with contempt upon the vanities which we have been considering; who despise the silly career of the trifler, the degrading sensualism of the mere pleasure-seeker, and the plodding avarice of the worldling, who are, nevertheless, equally included in the expressive description of the text, under another form. These are the individuals whose highest aim in life is simply to win a name, and occupy a position of distinction among their fellow-men. The vain desire of popular applause constitutes the ruling motive of their conduct. Destitute of that true integrity of purpose which would prompt them always to do the right, regardless of applause or scorn, they are governed by no higher law of rectitude than a selfish ambition to acquire a brilliant reputation. To this object they are ready to sacrifice every other. Truth, duty, God's glory, the interests of their fellow-men, and their own eternal well-being; all are sacrificed upon the altar of a reckless, heartless ambition. The desire to make, for themselves, a name which shall command the respect, and extort the praises of their fellow-men, rules all their actions, to the exclusion of every higher and nobler principle.

The world has witnessed many illustrious examples of this character. An Alexander, a Cæsar, and a Bonaparte, who, prompted by an insatiable thirst for power and renown, sought to make their way to the accomplishment of their objects through fields of blood and carnage, and over the prostration of all the rights and interests of their fellow-men, have furnished the world with a vivid illustration of the workings of this odious principle. Wherever it has been exhibited, it has distinctly proved itself to be, emphatically, *a sowing of the wind*. For, what is an earthly name or reputation, even when acquired and established, but an idle blast? Who that regards attentively the nature of the applauses of the popular mass, and the manner in which they are usually bestowed, can look upon them as possessing any real or

substantial worth? When we see the world, instead of bestowing its applause upon the good, the virtuous, or the truly worthy, almost uniformly delighting to honour the basest of the aspirants for its favour—crying Hosannas to the man of blood, the reckless demagogue, or the senseless clown, who will not admit that the pursuit of such distinctions is but *sowing an idle wind*? And when we see how easily the breath of popular applause is converted into the blast of infamy and scorn, how vividly does the light and unsubstantial nature of this pursuit appear! But even should the aspirant for fame attain the utmost of his desires; even should his name be honoured with the highest and most lasting tokens of distinction, what will it avail? Even in the midst of the enjoyment of his hopes, the deluded votary of fame is oppressed with the irresistible consciousness that all is vanity and vexation of spirit—that he has *sown the wind*, and must reap, eventually, *the whirlwind*.

Such are some classes who may be said to *sow the wind*. Of course, many others might be noticed. These, however, may suffice for illustrations. All the workers of iniquity, of whatever kind or character, must be included in the catalogue. And now,

II. We inquire into the end of these things. “*They shall reap the whirlwind.*” It is scarcely necessary to remark that this implies, in general, that the end of these workers of iniquity shall be *overwhelming destruction*. This is the principal idea conveyed by the application of the term “*whirlwind.*” Whirlwinds are often used, in Scripture, to represent great and extraordinary calamities. Here, we apprehend, it refers to the final doom of unrepenting sinners. “*They shall reap the whirlwind.*” They shall receive, as the fruit of the course of life which they have pursued, the destructive tempest of God’s judicial wrath. This shall be their *harvest*—the concentrated results of their wasted, prostituted lives. There are several ideas suggested by the term *whirlwind*, in reference to the final doom of the ungodly, which we may briefly notice.

1. The language seems to intimate *that their doom shall correspond, in character, with their course of life*. “They have sown the *wind*, and they shall reap the *whirl-*

*wind.*" The calamity threatened, it will be observed, is of the same nature with the sin charged. Their sin was having *sown the wind*, their punishment, reaping the same wind in the form of a *whirlwind*. And such, we apprehend, will be the prominent characteristic of the final punishment of the ungodly. There will be such an exact connexion between their individual sins and their present sufferings, that the latter will constantly remind them of the former, and practically convince them that they themselves have been the authors of their own damnation—that their present sufferings are the proper fruits of their former conduct. We cannot, of course, determine to what extent this correspondence between the sins and sufferings of the ungodly shall be carried; yet, from the language of our text, and other similar passages, we may safely infer that such a correspondence will exist, and that in it will consist much of the horror of that future scene of torment. Doubtless, to the *drunkard*, much of the unhappiness of that fearful state will consist in the possession of a still *insatiable and burning thirst for drink*, combined with a deep conviction that the means of its gratification are for ever beyond his reach. And so, doubtless, will it be with sinners of all classes and characters. The lusts and passions which they have so long nourished in their souls, deprived of all the means of gratification, and thrown loose from all restraints of reason and of fear, will then rage with an intensity of self-torturing agony, which will form an important item in the pains of hell. Thus they will find, to their super-added misery, that they are, indeed, but *reaping the whirlwind*, the *seeds* of which they themselves have sown.

2. Their punishment *will be sudden in its infliction*. A *whirlwind*, ordinarily, gives but little warning of its approach. It may arise when the atmosphere all around seems calm and clear; when the heavens are cloudless, and all nature apparently rejoicing in conscious security. At the most unexpected moment, the light cloud rises upon the distant horizon, traverses, with unequalled velocity, the intervening distance, and, ere the unhappy inhabitants of the devoted place are aware of its approach, the whirlwind is upon them in all its fury. The laws of its appearance and progress are unknown to men; they can-

not calculate its times. And thus it is with the doom of the impenitent. It often comes at the most unexpected moment. In the time of their greatest prosperity, when they are flattering themselves with the most sanguine hopes of security and peace, even then, often, is the commission issued, and the agents of their destruction sent forth. "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." Even in the midst of the abundance of their earthly possessions and enjoyments, when they are congratulating themselves on the prospect of many peaceful, happy days to come, even then the sentence may go forth—"Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee," and

"Then, in a moment, suddenly,  
To ruin brought are they."

3. *Irresistible.* A whirlwind is a combination of various winds, all united and brought to bear upon some particular spot. Of course, such a combination must possess peculiar power. It is, as it were, a concentration of all the elements of power which the agitated air always exhibits. Such an influence must, from the very nature of the case, prove utterly irresistible by human power. Man's strength quails and sinks before it. When the storm has once arisen, and the dreaded tornado starts out upon its mission of destruction, its path is marked throughout by the utter prostration of every thing which dares to impede its progress. Whole forests are uprooted, and sent whirling through the air. Houses and homes, and every barrier which man may erect for his own defence, are swept aside, like the withered leaf by the autumn wind. Man feels, in its presence, his utter helplessness, and flies, for refuge, to the impregnable fortresses of nature.

And how strikingly does this characteristic of the whirlwind illustrate the nature of that storm of wrath which shall finally come upon the ungodly! It too—and in a more unqualified and absolute sense—will be irresistible. "Who may abide the day of his coming? Who shall stand when he appeareth?" Sinners may resist the word

of God: they may abide, unmoved, his warnings, denunciations, and threatenings; but they cannot resist that overwhelming work of judgment which He will execute at last when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In the hands of God, they will then be but as the chaff which the wind driveth away. Prostrate and helpless before the throne of his glory, they can only cry, in despairing accents, to "the mountains and the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him who sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." But they shall cry in vain. No power can rescue them from the hands of the Omnipotent, for "the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Truly, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

4. *Overwhelming.* Nothing can be conceived more dreadful than the desolation produced by the whirlwind. It leaves behind it, in its progress, nothing but a trackless waste of ruin. Desolated homes—prostrated forests—withered vegetation, and expiring men—these are its results.

But how faint is the picture which even this fearful scene gives us of the overwhelming, desolating nature of the final judgments of God upon the sinner. Upon the wicked, we are told, he shall rain "snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." But who can conceive the depth of desolation implied in that description? Only this can we say, in reference to that fearful scene of torment, that it will be intense, overwhelming, and perpetual. "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." "They shall go away into everlasting punishment." "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

And now, brethren, this is the *harvest of sin*—this the result of *sowing the wind*. Who, with this fact before his mind, will be contented to pursue the vain and sinful courses of the wicked? See,

1. The importance of improving present time. This is a seed-time for eternity. Every thought, word and action is a *seed* that will spring up hereafter.

2. The madness of those who are *sowing the wind*. They are labouring for their own destruction. They seem to be taking pains to claim the notice of God's ire.

3. How blessed they are who are living to God. By contrast. "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall, of the Spirit, reap *life everlasting*."

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## SERMON II.

### THE RESURRECTION.

ISAIAH XXVI. 19. "*Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise.*"

THE general design of this chapter seems to be to present a description of the happy circumstances which would attend the deliverance of the children of Israel from their captivity in Babylon, and their restoration to their native land. The prophet describes these circumstances by relating the song of praise and thanks, which, in that day, should be sung in the land of Judah. This song contains, in general, ascriptions of praise to God for his goodness in rescuing them from their calamities, and establishing them, in circumstances of peace and comfort, in their native land—joyful anticipations in reference to future happiness,—and vows and resolutions in regard to their future conduct. Our text and context are a part of the anticipations with which the church, in this song, cheered her hitherto desponding members, in reference to the future. The song seems to contemplate the church as just upon the eve of her deliverance. It is preceded by a brief, but expressive description of the trials and troubles in which they had long been involved. They had been in trouble; they had long been suffering adversity; they had, in fact, been dead—nationally and spiritually. But now a better day was dawning. The voice of their Redeemer had uttered the joyful promise, "thy dead men shall live." A restoration to a new existence was about to be accomplished. They had long been dead as a nation; but God would restore their nationality. The slumbers of spiritual death had long rested upon

them; but the quickening energies of their Redeemer would break those slumbers, and restore them again to spiritual life. Thus the darkness of death which had so long enveloped them, both as a nation and as a church, was about to pass away, and the light of a new and glorious life about to dawn upon them. In view of these joyful prospects the church is called to awake and sing; to arouse from that state of despondency in which she had been so long involved, and rejoice in the prospect which lay before her.

Although, however, we regard the language here employed as referring primarily to the restoration of the Jewish nation, yet it evidently had a farther reference. The language itself directly applies to the resurrection of the dead. It could only have been used, in application to the national and spiritual restoration of the Jews, in a limited sense, and that merely by way of accommodation. The obvious and natural application of the expressions used, is that which refers them, ultimately, to the final resurrection of the dead, at the great day of the Lord. And accordingly, we find a similar mode of expression frequently used in the New Testament, to describe that great event. It is frequently represented as the living again of the dead; and accordingly, Christ says, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And this reanimation or restoration to life is also represented as identified, or intimately connected with the resurrection of Christ. "But now is Christ risen, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The language of the text, therefore, very appropriately describes that great event, in which the highest anticipations of believers are concentrated,—the final resurrection. We may view the language, therefore, as the address of Christ to his church, assuring her of the blessed prospects of her members who have fallen asleep in him. "*Thy* dead men shall live."

The subject, brethren, seems appropriate for our consideration on the present occasion. Since we last addressed you, three of our brethren have fallen asleep, we trust, in Jesus. The disease, by which they were re-



moved is yet prevailing, and we know not who next may be its victims. Such circumstances are naturally calculated to sadden our hearts, and to fill our minds with mournful thoughts. But amid these mournful circumstances, the language of our text presents us with a cheering thought. These, our dead, shall live again; together with the Saviour's risen body shall they arise, and with Him be for ever blessed. With these consolatory words, we are exhorted to comfort one another.

There are, in the text, in general, two facts stated. 1. That the church's dead shall live again. 2. That their reanimation is identified with the resurrection of Christ. To these two facts we propose to call your attention.

I. The church's dead shall live again.

Observe here that the language is limited to the church—"thy dead." It is the address of Christ to his own people; not indeed those who are connected with his visible church, but the members of his mystical body, those who are, by faith, interested in Him. To these the glorious prospects of the resurrection, and future life of blessedness, are exclusively confined. They belong not to the world, to the common mass, who are strangers to Christ. They are the heritage of his people; of those who sleep in Him. Thus the Scriptures uniformly speak. It is the dead who die *in the Lord*, who are pronounced blessed. It is the dead who *sleep in Jesus*, that it is promised God shall bring with Him at the great day. And in the language of our Lord himself, it is he who *believeth in Him*, that shall be raised up at the last day. While, therefore, we endeavour to describe the happy prospect contained in the text, let us bear in mind that that is the prospect of those only who are interested in Jesus, who are members of his mystical body. There is a sense, indeed, in which it may be said that *all* shall live again. All that are in their graves shall come forth. But the blessed, happy resurrection, described in the text, will be realized by those only who sleep in Jesus. Of such only can it be said that they shall truly live, and that they shall arise together with the dead body of Christ.

But let us notice, more particularly, the general nature of this great event, which is here predicted in reference to the dead in Christ.

1. The language intimates *the resurrection and reconstruction of the body*. The resurrection of the body is a doctrine which, you are aware, is denied, even by some who profess to believe the scriptures. And yet there is no doctrine more clearly and explicitly stated. The language of the text itself is sufficient evidence of this. We are here informed that the *dead shall live*. Now what part of the man is it that is denominated *dead*? Evidently not the *spirit*; for this, all admit, is immortal, and cannot die. It is the *body*, then, that is dead; and it is this, accordingly, that shall live again; for the language is express—"thy *dead* shall live." Again, these dead are represented as *arising*; presupposing that they were previously *in the grave*. And, accordingly, we are elsewhere informed, in reference to this event, that "they that *sleep in the dust of the earth* shall awake," and "all that are *in their graves* shall come forth." Now what part of the once living being is it that *sleeps in the dust*, or *lies in the grave*? Not the *spirit*; for divine revelation expressly informs us that, at the moment of dissolution, the spirit returns unto God who gave it. It is the *body* which returns unto the earth as it was. It is the *body*, therefore, which, in the resurrection, is raised up. The very term by which the event is expressed proves the fact. If it were merely the disembodied spirit which God designed should live at the great day, the application of the term *resurrection* to that event, would be utterly destitute of sense: for the term necessarily implies the previous death, and lying in the grave, of the object to which it is applied. But the *spirit*—Scripture and reason assure us—is never dead—never lies in the grave; but returns immediately to God who gave it. If there be such a thing as a resurrection at all, therefore, it must be of the *body*. And, that there will be such a resurrection, we have the most abundant evidence. In frequent instances, both in the Old and in the New Testament, we have explicit recognitions of this fact. Job recognised it, when he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. Isaiah

foresaw it when he gave utterance to the language of our text. Daniel also, when he said, "Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake," &c. Passing down to the records of the New Testament, we find the doctrine expressly asserted and maintained by our Lord himself. "The hour is coming," says he, "in the which, all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." And again; "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The apostle Paul also distinctly proclaims the same great truth. In the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, he devotes particular attention to this subject; arguing and illustrating the fact in question from the resurrection of Christ. "Now if Christ be preached, that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." Thus the fact is distinctly asserted and proved, by the whole tenor of divine revelation, that the dead shall rise again; that the bodies, which, after their separation from the soul, return to dust, shall eventually be restored to their original shape, and reanimated with the breath of life. This is the great and leading fact with which the hearts of believers are consoled, in view of death. There is something peculiarly painful and repulsive in the idea of annihilation—of final and irretrievable destruction. No sensitive being can fully realize and endure the thought. The only thing which can sustain the soul, in view of any great and fearful change, is the prospect of ultimate happiness beyond. This prospect the doctrine of the resurrection furnishes; and with it the heart of the believer is encouraged. He knows that, though this body must be dissolved, and mingle with the clay, yet it will rise again, and be changed into another and better frame. He knows that, though "after his skin, worms will destroy this body, yet in his flesh he shall see God."

The question is sometimes asked in reference to this event, whether the *same* bodies, which sleep in the grave, will be raised up; or whether *new* bodies will be formed

out of them, for the inhabitation of the glorified spirits. In answer to this, the scriptures clearly warrant us to say that great and important changes will take place, but yet the *identity* of those bodies shall remain. The very term *resurrection* implies the sameness of the bodies raised up with those laid in the grave. Were different bodies formed, the event might be called *creation*, but could not be termed *resurrection*. The scriptures, also, uniformly speak of this event as the rising again of those who have died, and who lie in the grave; evidently implying the identity of the body raised up with that buried. But while the general identity of the bodies raised will remain, the scriptures also assure us that great and important changes shall pass upon them. They will be divested of all their present attributes of carnality, weakness, corruptibility, and mortality, and transformed into a new character, in these respects essentially different. The general character of the risen body of the believer is described by its conformity to the body of Christ. "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." And, in another place, the apostle tells us that we shall bear the image of Christ. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Whatever, then, of glory, honour, power, and blessedness, we can conceive, as belonging to the glorified body of Christ, the same, limited only in degree, will belong to the risen believer. The apostle, however, gives us a still clearer view of the character of the glorified body, by recounting some of its prominent characteristics; placing them in contrast with its present attributes. 1 Cor. xv. 42. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption," &c. From this description we learn,

1. That the risen body will be *incorruptible*. One of the most striking characteristics of the human body, in its present state, is its universal tendency to decay. It possesses the elements of dissolution in itself. And accordingly, we find these uniformly operating, and finally accomplishing the death of men. Even where no external cause of death assails us, these internal elements of decay are at work, and will, eventually, wear out the brittle

thread of life. But a glorious change, in this respect, will pass upon these bodies, as they revive beyond the grave. This corruptible will then put on incorruption. All the seeds of decay and death will be wholly eradicated from our renovated systems. These purified bodies will then be wholly unassailable by the ravages of disease; they will be unfailingly proof against the undermining progress of years. Like gold tried in the fire, they will remain bright and indestructible through the endless succession of ages.

2. It will be *immortal*. "This mortal shall put on immortality." Incorruptibility and immortality are attributes, so nearly allied, that they cannot be easily separated in our minds. Still there is a distinction. The apostle uses both terms, evidently intending to present different ideas. The difference we apprehend to be this. An incorruptible body is one which cannot perish by natural decay or dissolution; but still such a body might be annihilated. An immortal body, however, is one which cannot die, either by its own weakness, or by any external power. Such God has been pleased to constitute the bodies of his children, beyond the grave. They are beyond the reach of death, from any and from every source. In their new state of existence, there shall be no more death. In defiance of time, and superior to all possible injury, their bodies shall live with God, for ever and ever.

3. It will be *powerful*. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." In the present state our bodies are compassed with infirmity. We might almost say, they are identified with weakness. For how puny is the utmost reach of power to which they can attain! In any exertion, how soon is their strength exhausted, and their power prostrated! But, in the future state, languor, weakness, and weariness are unknown. The risen body is endowed with a strength and power which place it beyond the reach of weariness or exhaustion. We have no means of estimating the strength of the glorified body, as we know of no resistance it will have to overcome; but we may learn something of its extent from its constant and uninterrupted employment in the service of God. We are told that they serve him day and night;

that is, they serve him without cessation or rest. They will, of course, then need faculties fitted for these services; faculties whose vigour the magnitude of no duty will overcome, and no continuance of action fatigue or impair. And such, accordingly, they are constituted. They are raised in power, and clothed with strength adequate to their important duties.

4. It will be *glorious*. "It is sown in dishonour; it will be raised in glory." The nature or extent of this glory we are unable to conceive. It will consist in a radiance of beauty and of splendour, encircling the risen body, similar to that which encircles the body of the blessed Saviour. Our bodies shall be fashioned like unto his *glorious* body. Inconceivable as is the glory of the risen Saviour,—equally beyond the reach of our present conceptions, is the glory which shall distinguish the re-animated bodies of believers. But this much we know—that, in symmetry, and beauty, and dignity, the glorified body will be perfect. It will be finished after the highest pattern in the universe. Man will then be fairer than when first he stood in the paradise of God, unstained with sin. Of all the visible works of God, undoubtedly, the exquisite in beauty and in glory, will be those bodies which His own Son has redeemed from death with His own precious blood.

5. It will be a *spiritual body*. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." It is difficult to determine precisely what idea is intended to be conveyed by the epithet *spiritual*, as applied to these bodies. It evidently cannot be used in its ordinary acceptance, as denoting *immateriality*. For the apostle expressly calls these risen beings *bodies*; plainly implying their materiality. The term *spiritual*, then, must be used in an unusual sense; and we understand it as denoting the extraordinary refinement which shall take place in these bodies. They will be purified from all the grossness of their present state. They will undergo a new modification, in consequence of which, although still material, they will be very different from what they now are. There is no difficulty in conceiving of matter in different states of refinement. We see it composing a metal, and a sun-

beam; and hence it is easy to believe that the power of God is able so to refine these bodies, that they may, comparatively, be said to be *spiritual*. How pure then—how almost ethereal, must those bodies be! Refined and purified from all the grossness of flesh and blood, and dignified with all the attributes of immortality!

Thus far we have contemplated the event predicted in the text, only as it respects the body. But there is more than this implied in it. It intimates,

2. *That the soul and body shall be re-united.* Not only shall the body be raised up, refined, dignified, and blessed; but the spirit, also, clothed with a new and glorious character, shall again take possession of its long deserted mansion. This fact is indeed implied in what has been already said in regard to the resurrection of the body. For the re-animation of the body will just consist in the restoration to it of its departed spirit. It is the absence of the spirit that constitutes what we denominate the *death* of the body. It must be its return, therefore, that renders it alive. Here, then, is another and important aspect in which we are called to contemplate the resurrection. It is the re-union of the immortal spirit and its earthly frame. It is the date of man's re-organized existence. During the long sleep of death, man exists in a disorganized state. He is possessed of but one of the properties of a human person—a spirit; the other—a body—lies in the grave. But in order that he may properly perform the duties, and perfectly realize the enjoyments, for which God designed him, he must possess both properties of his nature. He must be an organized human person. He must possess body as well as soul. Accordingly, his body is raised up, refined and purified, and fitted for the residence of the spirit, in its new and glorified state. And into this body, thus prepared, the immortal spirit is again introduced. And this re-union being accomplished, the man is once more a perfectly organized being, and, hence, fitted for all duties and all enjoyments. And the new connexion, thus established, is permanent. Soul and body, once united, will part no more. Of that future existence, it is said, "there shall be no more death." Body and spirit, re-united, will hold intimate and uninterrupted fellowship for ever.

This is a consolatory, a joyful prospect, in view of death. In every sensitive soul, there is a natural attachment to the body it inhabits. The thought of separation from it—of leaving this cherished frame to mingle with the dust, is painful to the soul. But the prospect of this re-union, and, thenceforward, unbroken connexion, beyond the grave, relieves the mind of these gloomy reflections, and encourages it with joyful hopes.

3. The language intimates, farther, *the blessedness of that future state*, in which the body and spirit, thus reunited, shall exist. They shall *live*. The term *life*, as used in such connexion, means something more than mere existence. It denotes a condition of happiness and enjoyment. Hence we find the term frequently applied to the *righteous*, in distinction from the *wicked*; and, while the former are said to *live*, and to *have life*, the latter are said to *die—to perish eternally*. Now if mere vitality were intended, the term might be applied to both; for both will exist. But the term is used in the sense of *happiness—enjoyment*. Hence we find it frequently used to represent the blessedness of the future state. “I give unto them *eternal life*.” “He that believeth on me hath *everlasting life*.” “This is the promise which He hath promised us, even *eternal life*.” Thus the term *life* is used as the comprehensive expression of all the blessedness included in the promises of the covenant of grace, and in the gift of the Saviour. When, therefore, it is promised in our text, that our “dead shall *live*,” we are not only assured of their simple existence, but also of the blessedness of that existence. All the pleasures and enjoyments of that life are included in the promise. And who can comprehend the nature or extent of those enjoyments? They lie beyond the reach of finite conception. They will consist in entire deliverance from sin and suffering; in the complete conformity of all the emotions, dispositions, and desires, to the holy nature of God; in intimate and uninterrupted fellowship with Him; in the constant and delightful exercises of his worship; and in the blessed assurance that all these sources of joy are permanent and eternal.

In consequence of the grossness and earthliness of our present conceptions, it is impossible to realize the bless-



edness which will be derived from these enjoyments. But this much we know—it will embrace all the bliss God can impart, and man enjoy. “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.” “The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” “They are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Truly then may we say, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

Such is the general fact promised in the text. The dead body shall be raised up, united with the spirit, and they together blessed in the eternal enjoyment of God.

II. But we have, farther, a particular circumstance specified, in reference to this resurrection—*its connexion with that of Christ*. “*Together with my dead body shall they arise.*” Viewing this as the language of our Saviour addressed to his church, we regard it as an intimation that there is an intimate connexion between the resurrection of Christ and that of his people. And this is a fact confirmed by many passages in the New Testament. To refer to no other passages, the language of the apostle, in the discussion of the subject, in the fifteenth of 1st Corinthians, is sufficient. You will observe that the whole argument of the apostle, in favour of the doctrine of the resurrection, is derived from the fact that Christ was raised up. “If Christ be preached, that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?”—plainly implying that the fact of Christ being raised is a conclusive evidence of a general resurrection. This argument is founded upon the assumption that there is an intimate connexion between his resurrection and that of his people. If there were no such connexion, the apostle could not thus argue

from the one to the other. Again, in 1 Thess. iv. 14, the apostle uses similar language. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." There is, then, an intimate connexion between the resurrection of Christ and that of his people.

What is the nature of this connexion?

1. *That of cause and effect.* The resurrection of Christ is the procuring cause of that of his people. We do not say, indeed, that the simple re-union of the soul and body is an effect secured by the rising of Christ; for this will take place in reference to the wicked, who are not interested in his atonement. But the resurrection, under the circumstances in which the saints will enjoy it, is the fruit of the resurrection of Christ. They obtain it in consequence of his having previously obtained it in their behalf. Jesus Christ *rose*, as well as *died*, in the character of a *surety*. He triumphed over death, not only for himself, but in the name and behalf of his people. The results of his triumph are secured to them. So that, just as surely as he rose, so also shall they. It is upon this principle that the apostle argues in the passages referred to, 1 Cor. xv. 2. "Now is Christ risen, and become the first fruits of them that slept," &c. "In Christ shall all be made alive." Christ rose as a public person, as the representative of his people, just as Adam died. All, therefore, who are interested in him, shall also rise. God, in consequence of his having risen, is pledged to raise up all his people. And hence, says the apostle, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." And, accordingly, our Lord styles himself, "the Resurrection and the Life," and represents himself as having the keys of hell and death. It is from him that that power goes forth which ransoms his people from the power of the grave. That power he obtained by his own resurrection. Having met and vanquished him that had the power of death, by breaking his bonds, and rising from under his dominion, he procured a victory also for all his people. Hence we are taught to say, in reference to that event, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. The resurrection of Christ is *the pledge or assurance* of that of his people. "Now is Christ risen and become the *first fruits* of them that slept." The *first fruits* are an earnest of the approaching *harvest*. When we see these first fruits springing forth, we feel assured that the harvest will follow. And such is the resurrection of Christ in regard to our resurrection. It is the *earnest*, the *assurance*, of its accomplishment. Christ, we have already said, rose as a *surety*. He obtained the victory over the grave for his people. That victory, therefore, they shall enjoy. His purposes concerning them cannot be defeated. Just as surely, therefore, as he rose, so shall those who sleep in him. Accordingly, you will observe that the apostle, in proving the resurrection, first proves that Christ rose, and then infers the fact of our resurrection. For according to the connexion which exists between them, the one shall follow the other, just as certainly as does the harvest the first ripe fruits.

3. The resurrection of Christ is the *pattern* of ours. The great object and design of God, in all his arrangements and purposes, respecting believers, is that they might be conformed to the image of his Son. This is expressly said to be his design in their predestination, in their calling, and in their sanctification. And we may add, this also is designed in their final resurrection. God would have this conformity completed. It is completed, with reference to the *soul*, at death. Then the separated spirit is perfectly assimilated to the mind of Christ. In respect to the *body*, however, this conformity will only be consummated at the resurrection. But then it *will* be accomplished. He himself will then fashion these bodies like unto his own glorious body. In all essential particulars will their resurrection be conformed to that of Christ. And hence it is said, "We shall be like him." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

4. The language intimates the *subsequent intimacy and fellowship of believers with Christ*, after the resurrection. "With him." "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "They shall be ever with the Lord." Fellowship with Christ is the great, distinguishing charac-

teristic of the future state of the righteous. Thus Paul spoke of it, when giving utterance to his longings to depart. It was *to be with Christ*. It was the prospect of this communion that made him desirous to depart. Thus also our Lord himself represented the blessedness of the future state, when he prayed, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me *be with me where I am*." The great distinguishing characteristic of the life beyond the grave is its intimate connexion with Jesus Christ. How precious this consideration to those who love the Saviour! How reviving, how joyful the thought that, in the future state, we shall hold the most intimate and uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord of glory, our risen Redeemer! Learn,

1. Consolation in reference to the departure of Christian friends. "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope."

2. Encouragement to believers in prospect of death.

"An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave;  
Legions of angels can't confine me there."

3. The interest and duty of all in view of death. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

### SERMON III.

#### THE DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS AND SOBRIETY.\*

1 Thes. v. 6. "*Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*"

THE apostle, in the close of the preceding chapter, and in the beginning of this, discusses, it will be observed, the important subject of the second coming of the Lord. His primary object in introducing this subject seems to have been to furnish a source of consolation to those who were mourning the departure of Christian friends or relatives. Hence, after assuring such that all who fell asleep in Jesus, (and this is true of all his followers,) God

\* A New Year's sermon, and the last but one that Mr. Hanna preached at Clinton.

would bring with him at the last; and after describing in glowing terms that glorious event,—the final resurrection of the righteous,—the apostle exhorts mourning friends to improve this pleasing prospect for their consolation. “Wherefore,” he adds, “comfort one another with these words.” Having introduced this subject, the apostle proceeds to make use of it for another purpose. Having applied it to bereaved and mourning friends, for the purposes of consolation, in reference to the departed, he now proceeds to apply it to the living, for the purpose of exciting all to diligent and earnest preparation for that solemn scene. And the point on which he particularly fixes, for the purpose of enforcing this important duty, is the suddenness of its occurrence. “Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” This is true, both of the coming of the Lord to each individual at death, and of his final appearance to judge the world. In regard to each of these events, we are distinctly taught by the Lord himself, that “of that day and that hour knoweth no man.” The precise time in which we shall be summoned hence, and called to stand before the judgment-bar, is a secret which is known only to the Omniscient. Hence that event will come upon all the workers of iniquity, finally, at a moment when they look not for it; striking them with sudden and overwhelming confusion. “For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” But, although such is the consequence of this sudden and unexpected appearance of the Lord, to them who look not for him, such should not, and need not be its result to Christians. For although they know no more than the men of the world when the Son of man cometh, yet they are taught, and they are well aware, that he may come at any moment, and that it is their interest as well as duty, to be constantly looking for him. “Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day.” Ye have been enlightened by the Spirit of God, and therefore you are aware of the sudden and unexpected nature of the Lord’s final ap-

pearance, and of the necessity of being always prepared to meet it. Act then in accordance with your privileges and character. Since you are children of light, and of the day, "sleep not, as do others, but watch and be sober." It is natural that those who are of the night, and of darkness, whose minds are still clouded by sin, should sleep—should be insensible to these solemn realities. But surely better things are to be expected from those who profess to have been taught of God.

Since we, therefore, profess to belong to this latter class, "let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." The day of the Lord is fast hastening on. The time when each of us must go hence, and stand before the judgment-bar of God, is gradually, but continually approaching. Each year, as it rolls away, and mingles with the past, brings us still nearer and nearer to that solemn scene. Aware of these interesting facts, taught, as we all are, by the oft repeated admonitions of the word and providence of God—that we are thus constantly and rapidly approaching to our final reckoning, how reasonable and appropriate the admonition,—“Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober!” The present, brethren, we apprehend, is an occasion which is well calculated to impress this solemn admonition upon our attention. We are just at the close of another year. We are celebrating the last Sabbath of '51. That year, memorable to most of us, by many varied scenes of joy and sorrow, is fast receding into the distant past, and when a few days are past, shall be numbered with the years that were. We enter then upon another period of the brief existence allotted to us here. Who does not feel that, in thus passing from year to year, we are rapidly hastening to the judgment-bar? And who knows that, ere the coming year may have closed upon us, many of us may not be summoned to their account? “We know not the day nor the hour.” How important, then, that we should be always ready; and, for this purpose, that we should watch and be sober!

Three things in the text demand our attention.

I. The evil warned against. *“Let us not sleep.”*

II. The duties enjoined. *“Watch, and be sober.”*

III. The argument enforcing them. *“Therefore.”*

I. The warning. "Let us not sleep, as do others." Of course the term "*sleep*," as here used, must be understood in a moral or spiritual sense. It designates that deadly stupor which rests upon the mind and conscience of the sinner, in reference to spiritual things, and which paralyzes all the moral powers of the soul. It is, in other words, that moral insensibility—that reckless carelessness and unconcern which mark the conduct of the men of the world, in reference to their eternal interests. This unhappy condition is fitly denominated *sleep*. There are many points of resemblance between this spiritual slumber and that of the body. A notice of some of these may illustrate the nature of this condition, and enforce the warning against it.

1. *Sleep is a state of insensibility*; and such, in a moral sense, is the condition of the sinner. Sleep is a suspension of the voluntary exercise of the powers of the body and mind. During its continuance, all the senses which connect us with the outer world are, as it were, locked up, and we are utterly unconscious of the existence of objects, and of the occurrence of events, around us. No matter what events may transpire, or what important interests may be deciding in the sleeper's presence, while that slumber remains unbroken, he is insensible to them all. Wrapped in the death-like unconsciousness of sleep, he knows no more, he feels no more, in reference to his own best interests, than though he were really non-existent. And how well does this correspond with the unhappy state of the slumbering sinner! A deep and death-like insensibility rests upon his soul, in reference to all his spiritual interests. He lives, indeed, as though he were unconscious that he had a soul, or that he was destined for any other state of being than the present. To his worldly affairs, indeed, he is sufficiently awake. In reference to these, he is all attention—all anxiety and concern. It is in reference to his more important, his eternal interests, that he is asleep. To him, all the solemn realities of life, and death, and eternity, are but as a fancy, or a dream. He realizes not their actual truth; he lives, in reference to them, as though they were but a fable. Although God is ever above and around him, upholding him

by his providence, protecting him by his care, counselling him by his word and Spirit, and marking the way that he takes to bring him into judgment, yet the sinner is wholly unconscious of his presence—he is utterly insensible to the influence of these solemn facts. He is unconscious, also, of his own moral character. Although wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, he pleases himself with the delusion that he is rich and increased in goods, and has need of nothing. Although, according to the testimony of God, altogether filthy; in his own eyes, he is pure. Equally unconscious is he of his misery, present and prospective. He is, in a moral sense, wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores, yet his deadly stupor renders him insensible to his sufferings and shame. Like the unconscious drunkard, wallowing in the mire, or perishing with cold, he feels not his wretchedness and disgrace. Yet how different his impressions when his senses are restored! He is not only unconscious of his present misery and degradation, however, but equally, ay, more so, in reference to that which awaits him in the future. Hanging over the fearful depths of the lake of fire, by the tender thread of life, he is just as insensible to his danger as the unconscious sleeper, who perishes beneath the sudden stroke of the midnight assassin. Hence, the day of the Lord, the day of dissolution and of summoning to judgment will come upon such as a thief in the night. Sudden destruction shall come upon them, just when they are pleasing themselves most with fancied visions of peace and safety. Such is the first unhappy feature of the sinner's spiritual slumber—*insensibility*.

2. Sleep is a state of *inactivity*;—and such is man's moral condition. Not only is the mind of the sleeper disconnected from outward things, and wrapped in utter insensibility, but the body also is for the time motionless and inactive. One of the chief designs of natural sleep is to refresh the physical powers, which may have been exhausted by previous fatigue or toil, and to fit for renewed exertions. Hence it was designed to be, and in its ordinary occurrence is, a state of absolute repose. Mind and body are alike exempt from the activity and toil of the waking hours, and rest in quiet inaction.



And what a fit emblem of the state of the sinner is sleep, in this respect! In a moral point of view, the sinner is as inactive and motionless as the unconscious sleeper is physically. They may be active and busy indeed, in the pursuit of worldly objects. All their powers—physical and mental—may be in the most lively and vigorous exercise in these pursuits: yet in regard to all those exercises which have for their object the glory of God, and the salvation of the soul, they are as inactive as the slumberer in the grave. They have physical and moral powers, which might be applied to these spiritual and heavenly pursuits; but a death-like torpor rests upon them. They hear of heaven, and are warned of the necessity of exertion to reach it; yet such exertion is never made. They are warned that they must *strive* to enter in at the strait gate, else they shall not be able; yet, languid and listless, they disregard the warning, and sit down in shameful indolence in their sins. They are warned that, if they would escape the wrath to come, they must fly to the refuge revealed in the gospel; yet they cannot think of incurring the anxiety, the activity, and the earnest thoughtfulness, which such an exercise involves; hence they quietly settle themselves again to sleep. And while thus slothful and inactive in reference to their own personal interests, they are equally so in regard to the public cause of God, in reference to the general duties required of them. Though God commands “Go work to-day in my vineyard,” and although he commends many important objects to their attention, their carnal minds are not subject to his law, and hence, quieting their convictions with the impious suggestion, “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?” they wrap themselves still more closely in their obstinate slothfulness.

3. Sleep is a state of *delusion*—and such is the sinner’s state. We have already observed, that in sleep there is an entire suspension of the voluntary exercise of the powers of the body and the mind. In neither respect are the powers of the sleeper under the control of his reason or his will. It will not be concluded from this, however, that his mind is wholly inactive. On the con-

trary, all experience testifies that, in sleep, the mental powers are often the most vigorously and actively employed. There is a marked difference, however, between the nature of their operations then, and during the waking hours. In the latter case, they are usually, to some extent, under the control of our reason and our wills; so that the thoughts or reflections, to which they give rise, are, at least in some measure, regular and orderly, and agreeable to facts. In sleep, however, the mind seems to be wholly absolved from the restraints of reason and of truth; and it accordingly roves in the fields of fancy. Hence, what singular, what unaccountable visions will often arise in the mind of the sleeper! What vague, unreasonable fancies engross his thoughts! And yet, at the same time, the dreamer fondly imagines that all his senseless visions are realities.

What a striking resemblance, in this respect, between natural and spiritual slumber! The sinner's whole life is but an empty dream; and all his cherished schemes of happiness—all his laborious pursuits, and luxurious enjoyments, are but the phantoms of imagination. True, he does not *think* so—they all appear realities to him. And such, also, to the dreamer, appear all the bright fancies which flit before his vision, in the hours of sleep. It is the *awakening*, that convinces him of their true character; and it will be the sinner's awakening, alone, that will develop to him the true character of his pursuits and pleasures in this world. That awakening will come at length—here, or in the other world. Then he will confess that his whole life was but a dream; then he will feel that all his ideas, which he so fondly cherished, were but the phantoms of error—the creatures of imagination. Then he will find that all his schemes of happiness have passed away, like the baseless fabric of a vision; leaving not a wreck behind!

4. We only add, that sleep is a condition in which we are *peculiarly exposed to danger*; and, in this respect, it is a fit emblem of the sinner's unhappy state. Sleep totally disarms its subject of all his powers of self-protection. It renders him at once insensible, and incapable of action; and hence deprives him of all that security

which he enjoys when capable of self-defence. Hence thieves and assassins so generally avail themselves of the hours of sleep to accomplish their foul purposes. Their victims then are defenceless, and incapable of resistance.

How true a picture, this, of the sinner's state. Wrapped in the unconscious slumber of spiritual death, he heeds not the dangers that lie thick around him. Satan, his great adversary, taking advantage of his defenceless state, gradually involves him in his snares, until, at length, he secures a permanent dominion over him. "Taken captive by him at his will," he is drawn away, by his insidious devices, to his utter ruin. Still slumbering on in senseless security, he realizes not his danger, and hence makes no effort to avert it. And thus he continues, senseless and secure, until, finally, the day of the Lord comes upon him, as a thief in the night, and the fearful realities of the world to come break in upon his bewildered vision.

Such is the state of the sinner—such the condition of the world. *They sleep.* They are insensible, inactive, deluded—and exposed to imminent danger. Now, says the apostle, "Let us not thus sleep." If others do, be it our part, knowing the misery and dangers of that condition, carefully to guard against it. The language implies that there is danger, even of Christians, relapsing into this state of insensibility and inactivity. It is, however, utterly inconsistent with their character. It is, moreover, ruinous to their happiness. Therefore, as we value our character as children of the light and of the day, and as we would promote our present and future happiness, "*let us not sleep, as do others.*"

II. Having warned us against a danger to which we are exposed, the apostle next presents certain duties, which are incumbent upon us. "*Watch and be sober.*" Watchfulness and sobriety are duties which are repeatedly enjoined upon us by the word of God. They are frequently represented as peculiarly appropriate to the Christian's character and condition, and as essential to his comfort here, and his final safety.

Taken in their most general sense, these duties include many subordinate ones, the performance of which is es-

sential to their accomplishment. Thus *watchfulness*, for example, implies, in the first place, *wakefulness*. It supposes that the sinner has been aroused from his carnal self-security in sin, and is now fully conscious of the nature of his position, and of the dangers which surround him. It implies, further, the exercise of *a constant and scrutinizing attention to his circumstances and prospects*, in order that he may detect any dangers or difficulties which may be in his way. And, in intimate connexion with this mental scrutiny, watchfulness also implies an *earnest activity* in providing for, and guarding against, the dangers which may beset his path. Thus, therefore, an individual is properly said to watch, when he is truly alive to his spiritual interests and prospects; when he is diligently engaged in observing the peculiarities of his condition and circumstances; and when he is, at the same time, active and earnest in endeavouring to guard against the dangers which may beset him.

*Sobriety* literally denotes *temperance* or *moderation*. It seems to have a special reference here, to the duty of temperance or abstinence in regard to the use of *intoxicating drink*. This is evident from the fact that it is contrasted with *drunkenness*, in the following verses. "They that be drunken are drunken in the night; but let us, who are of the day, be *sober*." The apostle, therefore, would intimate, by the use of this term, in his exhortation, that there was a special obligation resting on Christians to shun the inebriating cup—that they, of all others, should most strictly guard against this shameful and ruinous vice.

But the sobriety here inculcated evidently includes something more than this. It also denotes gravity and seriousness of mind, and an outward deportment harmonizing therewith. It stands opposed to all vain and frivolous employments—to all revelry and dissipation, and to all those sinful indulgences in which the giddy seekers of pleasure so much delight. To be truly sober, therefore, according to the scripture interpretation of that term, we must not only avoid the intoxicating bowl, but also all the other vain and sinful indulgences of the world; and our thoughts, conversation, and deportment

must be habitually serious and circumspect. It will be observed that the exhortation of the text is based upon, and has special reference to the coming of the Lord. The design of the apostle, in inculcating these duties, in the present instance, evidently is, to prepare for meeting, in safety, that solemn event. In discussing these duties, therefore, more particularly, we shall confine our remarks to this reference.

To "watch and be sober," then, in the sense of the text, is just to pursue such a course of conduct, that when the Son of man cometh, he may find you ready to receive Him, and to enter into His joy.

1. Realize, and constantly cherish in your minds the impression, that the Lord will come, and that that event will be fraught with the most serious results. To watch for any coming event, evidently presupposes a conviction, in the mind of the watcher, that that event will come. Without this, no rational being could be induced to pursue this course. There must be some anticipation, more or less assured, that the event will, at length, transpire; else the mind grows wearied and impatient, and gladly turns to other objects. Hence, to watch for the coming of our Lord requires, on our part, a constantly cherished impression that his coming is an ascertained reality.

We do not stop here to prove that such is the fact—that the Lord will come again. The proof of this fact lies all over the Bible, and is familiar to every reader. But what we now urge, is, that a constantly cherished impression of this fact is necessary to Christian watchfulness, and is, therefore, an incumbent Christian duty. You are aware that there are many facts, with which we are familiar, which make no abiding impression on our minds—which are scarcely ever present to our thoughts; and which consequently exert no influence on our lives. It is not sufficient, therefore, that we *theoretically know* that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again, and call us into judgment. It is not enough that we have some correct conceptions of the serious and solemn nature of that event. All this we may have, and yet live as careless and indifferent in regard to it, as the most ignorant barbarian. There must be an *impression* of the facts

known; we must feel their reality and importance; they must be frequently the subjects of our thoughts. He who lives from day to day, without ever thinking of the coming of the Lord, surely cannot be said to be watching for it. You know how it is with other expected events. If you are looking for a friend, you will often think of him—or, if you are expecting any important worldly gain, you think of it. So, if you watch for the coming of the Lord, that event will often be the subject of your serious and anxious meditations. “My soul waiteth for the Lord,” said the Psalmist, “more than they that watch for the morning.”

2. Carefully abstain from every course of conduct which would interfere with your preparation for his coming. The apostle had already said that the day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night. At the most unexpected moment, the unhappy sinner may be cut down, and summoned to his final account. How dangerous, then, the condition of those who are living in carnal security and sinful indulgence! Such often delude themselves with the idea that the coming of the Lord is yet far in the distant future, and that, ere that event arrives, they will be ready to abandon their sinful courses, and prepare to meet him. But how presumptuous—how perilous the delusion! “For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.” And who would wish to be summoned, in the midst of his dissipations, and vanities, to the judgment-bar? Who would wish to be called there from the ball-room—from the theatre—from the scene of brilliant worldly amusement? Who would not tremble at the thought of an immediate transition from these scenes of gaiety and revelry to the fearful realities of the eternal world? But who that engages in these gay and guilty scenes knows that he shall not be summoned immediately from them to his final account? Who that quaffs the inebriating bowl, knows but that ere the stupefying effects of that potation shall have passed away, his spirit may have passed to the immediate presence of its Judge? Who that engages in the mazy whirl of the voluptuous dance, knows but that, from that giddy scene, he may

be summoned to his last account? How important, then, that we be always *sober*! The Lord is at hand! We know not the moment he may come. How unreasonable, and how self-destructive their conduct, who spend the brief, uncertain moments of their life in revelry and dissipation!—employments which ensure their condemnation, if taken away in the midst of them. This dissipation prevents watchfulness. It blinds the mind and hardens the heart. Be ye therefore *sober*.

3. Be active and diligent in the performance of Christian duties. “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing.” Thus our Lord intimates that a diligent and faithful discharge of the several duties of our stewardship, is the best preparation which we can make for His coming. He has given us all a work to do. He has enjoined many important duties upon us. Evidently, then, the best preparation for meeting Him at last, and being found of Him in peace, is to be diligent, and persevering, and faithful, in the discharge of the duties of our station. Thus engaged, we are always ready for His coming. And this is evidently implied in watching. The servant, who is continually anticipating the return of his absent master, and who desires to secure his commendation, on his return, will be diligent in business. And so will it be with the servant of Christ. Knowing that his blessed Lord may come at any moment, he would be so constantly, and perseveringly employed, that at whatever moment He may come, He shall not find him idle. He is, therefore, “not slothful in business—fervent in spirit—serving the Lord.” He desires always to be “redeeming the time, because the days are evil,” and “whatsoever his hand findeth to do, to do it with his might; since there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave.” “Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing.”

III. The arguments enforcing this warning and exhortation, “*Therefore*,” &c. The text, you will observe, is a deduction from certain considerations, previously stated.

These considerations, therefore, form the principal arguments by which the duties, enjoined in the text are enforced.

1. Our *circumstances*—our *peculiar privileges*, demand that we should not “sleep as do others,” &c. “Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” We have been warned in regard to the coming of the Lord. We have not, like the heathen, been left in entire ignorance of it. On the contrary, we have had the most solemn and impressive admonitions of His coming. There is, therefore, no excuse, on our part, for insensibility or inaction. We know that the Lord cometh—we know that He may come at any moment; and we know the fearful consequences of his finding us unprepared. If, therefore, we still sleep in senseless security, our blood will be upon our own heads; and our condemnation, at last, will be fearfully aggravated by the consideration, that we knew our duty, but did it not. “Unto whom much is given, of them shall much be required.”

2. Our *profession demands it*. “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness.” It is natural that they who are of the night should sleep. It is natural that those who are yet asleep in sin should be indifferent to the solemn realities of the judgment and eternity. But surely a very different state of feeling, and a very different line of conduct, may be expected of the Christian. Enlightened, as he is, in the knowledge of things divine—accustomed to look on the things of God and eternity in their true and proper light—it may well be hoped that he at least will not be indifferent to these things, whoever else may be. How inconsistent, then, in such, to sleep! to sink down in careless apathy or indifference to the interests of their souls! In doing so, they give the lie to their profession. They evince that they are not—as they profess to be—the children of light, and of the day; but are of the night, and of darkness.

3. Our *safety demands it*. “The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.” “We know not the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh.” That fearful day, therefore, will come upon the senseless and se-



cure with swift and overwhelming destruction. "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." The only security, therefore, is in being *awake, watching and sober*. Our Lord frequently insists on this fact. After describing, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, the happy consequences of watching and waiting for the Master's coming, he depicts, in glowing terms, the consequence of the opposite conduct. "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming," &c. Matt. xxiv. 48-50. The same truth is illustrated in the parable of the ten virgins. Five of them were asleep, and unprepared when the Lord came. When they afterwards applied, his language was, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh."

4. Compliance with this exhortation is *intimately connected with our eternal happiness*. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing." To such it is that the commendation is addressed, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord." This watching is not, indeed, meritorious—it does not purchase heaven,—and wo to the man who rests on it for that purpose! It is, however, intimately connected with admission into heaven, by the appointment of our Lord. It is a means, necessary to the end; and we can only hope to enjoy the result, when thus using the means appointed to bring it about. "Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch, and be sober."

In conclusion,

1. Let me apply this subject to those who are yet in their sins. See here a true picture of your condition! You are asleep amidst fearful perils. "Awake, thou that sleepest!" Consider the horrors of the last awakening! Be wise in time. Your slumbers may be pleasant now, but O how fearful the result!

2. Let Christians learn hence what ought to be the distinguishing difference between them and the world. Watch and be sober. How painful to see pretended Christians

slumbering in senseless security! You, brethren, have been professing to be the Lord's; approve yourselves such by watching and sobriety.

3. Let the rapid flight of time admonish us all to be watching and waiting for the coming of the Lord. We are about to bid adieu to another year. It has brought us so much nearer to the judgment seat. When shall this succession of days, and months, and years, be over? To many of us *soon, very soon!*—to all of us ere long. O then let us watch and be sober.

## SERMON IV.

### THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN.\*

MATT. XXII. 21. *“Render, therefore, unto Caesar, the things that are Caesar's; and unto God, the things that are God's.”*

OUR relations to civil government, and the various duties arising from them, form a subject of peculiar interest to every individual in whom are united the characters of a Christian and a patriot. An ordinance of God—as civil government is acknowledged to be by all believers in divine revelation—intimately connected with the best interests of mankind,—he who regards the authority of God, and, at the same time, desires the welfare of his kind, cannot regard it with indifference. It is not a subject, therefore, which belongs exclusively—as many seem to suppose—to the politician and the statesman. It has special claims on the Christian's attention. God himself has directed our attention to it in his word; and by a clear and comprehensive exhibition of the principles on which government is based,—of the prerogatives and powers with which it is invested, of the objects for which it is established—and of the duties which devolve upon us, in relation to it—has opened to us a wide field for investigation and inquiry.

\* Preached at a congregational meeting, on a week day, Nov. 20, 1850.

Since, then, God himself has thus presented the subject to our notice, in his word, we have the clearest warrant for taking it up and making it a matter for our most serious reflection and careful investigation. Availing ourselves of this warrant, we propose, on the present occasion, to call your attention to this subject; and, at the risk of incurring the charge of treading on the forbidden ground of politics, we propose to inquire briefly into the nature and extent of the obligations which we owe to the civil government under which we live.

The text which we have selected, we apprehend, fully covers this ground, and presents us a basis, on which our conclusions, in reference to our civil duties, may be safely formed. It is—as you will perceive from the context,—the reply of our Lord to an inquiry proposed to him by the Jews on this subject. The inquiry was, “Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?” This question was proposed—not for the purpose of ascertaining the truth, as they hypocritically pretended—but for the ignoble purpose of entangling our Lord in his talk; in order that they might elicit some unguarded expression of opinion in reference to the Roman government, which might afterwards be used to his disadvantage.

In order to understand the insidious nature of this inquiry, it is necessary to bear in mind the fact, that the Jews were, at this time, and had been, for many years, under the dominion of the Romans; and as an acknowledgment of their subjection, had paid them an annual tribute. A part of the Jews, however, particularly the Pharisees, had steadily resisted their dominion, and opposed the payment of tribute; alleging that, as they were the peculiar people of God, and He their only rightful Sovereign, they could not, properly, be in subjection to any foreign prince whatever.

Others of the Jews, however, maintained the contrary opinion; and the question had become one of general interest and importance.

It was under these circumstances, that the Pharisees, accompanied by the Herodians, who are supposed to have been friendly to the Roman government, approached our

Lord, with the insidious inquiry, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" In presenting this question to our Lord, it was evidently their design to involve him in a dilemma, from which they imagined he could not possibly extricate himself without incurring the displeasure, either of the Jewish people, or of the Roman government.

For, should he, on the one hand, pronounce it right to give tribute to Cæsar, he would render himself odious to the Jews, by apparently coming in direct contact with their popular notions of liberty, and national independence. And should he take the other horn of the dilemma, and pronounce it unlawful, he would incur the displeasure of the Romans, and render himself liable to the charge of sedition and rebellion. Thus so artfully was the question contrived, that however it might be answered, it seemed almost certain that our Lord would be involved in difficulty.

But, notwithstanding their cunning, he soon convinced his antagonists that their efforts were in vain. Waiving a direct answer, he proceeds to illustrate, in a practical and familiar manner, the point at issue; and then, by a fair presentation of the question, in another form, compelled the Jews, in effect, to answer themselves.

"But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Cæsar's."

The image and superscription of coin were the likeness and titles of the sovereign, by whose authority the coin was issued, and rendered current. Now the Jews, by admitting that this was Cæsar's coin, and by consenting to receive it as the current coin of their country, did, in fact, acknowledge their subjection to his government; for the right of coinage, and of issuing coin, is one of the highest prerogatives and most decisive marks of sovereignty. It was, moreover, a tradition of their own rabbins, that to admit the impression and inscription of any prince on their current coin, was an acknowledgment of their subjection to him. The Jews, therefore, having re-

ceived the Roman coin, bearing the likeness and authoritative inscriptions of Cæsar, had, in fact, acknowledged his dominion. Our Lord's decision, then, was a natural and necessary consequence of their admission. "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," &c. As if he had said, "You have, yourselves, acknowledged his claims on you; render to him, therefore, his dues." And he adds—and the addition is intended to qualify the previous injunction—"render unto God the things that are God's." As though he had said—"It is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar. You are under his authority, and you, yourselves, by acknowledging his official acts, have recognised his government. You owe important duties to him, therefore, as your civil ruler. See that these be rendered. But, at the same time, remember that you owe still higher obligations to God. Your subjection to Cæsar does not absolve you from these. Let no civil duties, therefore, interfere with your supreme allegiance to the King of kings. Remember that the law of God is paramount to all others. Should the law of Cæsar, and the law of God, ever come in collision, remember that you are bound, above all things, to render unto God the things that are his." By this reply, our Lord completely evaded the difficulty in which his enemies had sought to involve him. He drew his answer from the Jews themselves; and so they could not condemn him for it. And the answer was such that the friends of Cæsar could not take offence. So skilfully, and, at the same time, so pointedly, was the question answered, that his wily foes were confounded, and forced to abandon, with shame, their efforts to entrap him.

But while we admire the ingenuity of our Lord's reply, there is contained in it a still stronger proof of his wisdom, than has yet been noticed. While his answer was a complete triumph over the insnaring efforts of his enemies, it also contains a clear and distinct announcement of two most important truths—truths which were not only suited to the Jews, in reference to their connexion with the government of Cæsar, but which are equally applicable to the relations which exist between citizens and government every where.

These truths are,—1. That it is our duty to render obedience to lawful authority, and to submit to the acknowledged and established government under which we live. 2. That this obedience and submission are limited and qualified by our superior obligations to God. These two propositions are so clearly contained in the text, that we shall not delay now to notice particularly the evidence which proves them to be the doctrines here designed to be taught. We shall then call your attention to each of them in their order.

I. *We owe important duties to the civil government under which we live.* “Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s.”

As we have already observed, Cæsar was the Roman emperor, and, as such, held dominion over Judea. It is not material to our present purpose to inquire how that dominion had been obtained,—whether justly, or unjustly,—or what was the character of Cæsar, as a sovereign or a man. Suffice it to say, he was, in fact, the governor of the Jews. He actually possessed the sovereignty over their nation, and had been acknowledged by them as their king. This is the fact on which our Saviour bases his injunction. His command, then, will extend to all similar cases; it is not peculiar to the Jews. Wherever any civil government exists, and has, in any of its official acts, been acknowledged by the governed, there the duty, here enjoined upon the Jews, is imperative. For the cases, being parallel, are necessarily subject to the same laws. We have, then, here, a general principle laid down, in reference to our civil relations,—that we are under obligations of submission, support, and obedience, to the existing government under which our lot may be cast.

In order to confirm this proposition, we remark, that *civil government is an ordinance of God*, and, hence, its claims upon us are divine. Were it merely a voluntary institution, which the people of any land might set up, and overthrow again, at pleasure, then our subjection to it would be a matter of discretion. There could be no moral obligation resting on us, either to support or oppose it, otherwise than circumstances might determine. But if, on the other hand, it be an institution of divine ap-

pointment, deriving its powers and prerogatives from God,—then our conduct, in reference to it, cannot be a matter of indifference. It is then not a matter of discretion, but of duty, that we give it our acquiescence and support. Divine institutions are always sacred, and have imperative claims on our regard—claims which cannot be resisted without rebellion against God.

Now, that civil government is a divine institution, we have the most abundant evidence in the Scriptures. Not to delay with other references, we have an unanswerable confirmation of the fact in Rom. xiii. “There is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God.” The apostle here speaks of the higher powers in general, including all civil governments, then existing, or future. That he refers to civil powers is evident from his reference to the *sword* which the ruler bears—a badge of authority which belongs only to the civil officer. And that his language was not intended to apply exclusively to the government then existing, is evident from the unlimited manner in which he speaks. “The powers *that be*,” and, “there is no power but of God.” The apostle distinctly intimates that the existing government under which Christians may, at any time, find themselves—no matter what may be its peculiar form, or what the character of the ruler, if it be limited to its proper sphere,—is to be regarded by them as an ordinance of God.

If it be, then, a divine institution, it has claims upon us which are just as sacred, and as binding on the conscience, as those of any other ordinance of God—not even excepting the church. And so the apostle, in the passage to which we have referred, deduces, from this fact, the duties which we owe to government. “Let every soul *be subject* unto the higher powers. Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. For which cause, *pay ye tribute* also.”

If the civil governor have God’s command to rule, his subjects must, by the same authority, be required to submit to his dominion. The relation which governor and governed sustain to each other, makes their duties correlative. Whoever, then, has a commission from God, to rule,—and such a commission belongs to every legal ma-

gistrate,—has imperative claims on the obedience and subjection of the citizens, over whom Providence has placed him. And let it be observed here, that these obligations rest on us, in reference to civil rulers, whatever may be their personal character. Some have contended that we are not bound by the authority of wicked or unjust rulers. But our text is a sufficient refutation of this opinion. Our Lord here commands the Jews to render tribute to Cæsar. Now the Cæsar who reigned at Rome at this time was Tiberius; a man who was distinguished as a tyrant, and as the slave of the grossest vices, and most debasing sensuality. And yet, even to this man, our Lord commands the Jews to be in subjection. And so when the apostle commands the Christians at Rome to be subject to the higher powers, the exhortation referred, not to amiable or godly princes, but to the most depraved and reckless tyrants; for such, at that time, swayed the Roman sceptre.

The duty here enjoined is incumbent, irrespective of the character of the person towards whom it is to be performed. It is a duty owed to the office, as an ordinance of God, and not to the man, personally considered.

Let it not be supposed, however, that because it is our duty to obey existing authorities, even when exercised by wicked men, that therefore it is right or proper to *aid in their elevation to such stations*. The conclusion by no means follows. The Israelites erred very grievously, and were severely reprov'd for demanding of the Lord a king; and yet a king being appointed, it became their duty to obey and support him. And so we may be required to submit to the government of a wicked ruler, whom we have placed over us; but that fact by no means absolves us from the guilt of placing him there, if we have been instrumental in doing so. God requires us to choose for our rulers men fearing him and hating covetousness; and, as far as our influence goes, we are responsible to him for their character.

But the point for which we now contend is, that whatever may be the character of the ruler, the duty of the citizen towards him remains unchanged. He may be a Cæsar or a Nero, yet as long as he occupies the ruler's



station it is incumbent on us to be subject, and to render unto him his due. It might be interesting here to notice more particularly the duties we owe to magistrates. Time will not permit us to dwell on them. We will, however, briefly notice some of them.

1. *Tribute*,—a portion of our worldly substance, to enable them to carry on the affairs of government. This is the matter particularly referred to in the text. The Jews were required to pay an annual tribute to the Roman government. This they were very reluctant to do. It was particularly with regard to this that they asked our Lord's decision. "Is it lawful to pay tribute?" Our Lord's answer clearly teaches, that it is not only lawful, but a duty, to render tribute to the existing government. And the apostle, in Rom. xiii., enforces the same duty. "Render unto all their dues—*tribute* to whom *tribute* is due," &c. And surely this is a reasonable duty. If we enjoy protection in our lives and property, and many other public and social advantages, from the hands of government, it is not unreasonable that we should contribute to the maintenance of the institution from which we derive these benefits. The payment of tribute or taxes should therefore be regarded, by the citizens, as a moral duty, and be as faithfully and conscientiously discharged as any other debt.

2. *Submission to their authority*. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors," &c. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers—to obey magistrates," &c. Of course, these commands of subjection and obedience to government must be taken with a limitation. They contemplate civil government as acting in its proper sphere—attending simply to temporal affairs. They do not refer to those cases in which government departs from its proper sphere, and invades the spiritual kingdom of God—trampling the rights of conscience, and interfering between man and his God. Such instances are provided for elsewhere, and we shall notice them more particularly again. But what we now assert and establish by the

passages quoted, is, that in temporal things, (and to these alone the prerogatives of civil government extend,) obedience and submission are the duty of the citizens. The passages quoted are too plain and emphatic to need illustration. They command us to be subject to every ordinance of man, to obey magistrates; and inform us that they who resist the power resist the ordinance of God, and shall receive to themselves damnation. And indeed these requirements are essential to the very being of government. If we were not required to submit and obey—if every citizen were at liberty to resist and render of no effect every act of government, which he might think wrong or oppressive, where would be the use of government? What would be its value? It would be nothing but an empty name and a solemn mockery of law. There must, then, be an absolute subjection and obedience to the ruling power, on the part of citizens, in things temporal. We do not say, indeed, that there are no cases in which subjects may lawfully resist and dethrone their rulers. With the examples recorded in scripture, and our own revolutionary struggle before our eyes, we cannot take this position. There may be cases of extreme and intolerable tyranny, which burst, at once, the bonds of civil subordination, and justify resistance. But these are rare exceptions in the history of governments, and for these our divine Master has made no special provision. He left them to be decided, (as they always must be decided,) at the moment, by the pressing exigencies and peculiar circumstances of the case, operating on the common feelings and common sense of mankind.

He lays down the general rule, however, that citizens must be subject and obedient to their rulers. And, excluding the extraordinary circumstance just named, and for which no law can be made—this is the universal rule. We must submit to the requirements, and obey the commands, of those who are over us, in authority. Their exactions may be burdensome, and their commands oppressive, yet, unless they overstep their proper limits,—as the ministers of God, they have a claim on our obedience.

3. *Respect and honour.* “Honour the King.” The

injunction of the apostle, in reference to ministers of the gospel, applies also to civil rulers. We should esteem them *for their work's sake*. Whatever may be their personal character, the station which they occupy claims for them a tribute of respect. This principle, if properly cherished, will prevent that reproachful and abusive method of speaking of rulers, so common at the present day. "Thou shalt not," says God, "*speak* evil of the ruler of thy people."

4. *Our prayers.* This is expressly enjoined, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, and intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;—*for kings, and for all that are in authority,*" &c. If prayer were more frequently on our lips, in reference to our civil rulers, instead of the abusive and debasing epithets that too often defile them, it would be incomparably better for the government, and for ourselves. God's blessing on civil rulers and their acts, is, doubtless, often withheld, because it is unsought. "Ye have not, because ye ask not."

We have thus endeavoured to illustrate the first proposition contained in our text, that there are special obligations resting on us, in reference to our civil rulers. We pass now to the

II. *That our obedience and submission to civil government are limited and qualified by our superior obligations to God.* "Render unto God the things that are God's."

This phrase might be discussed in a general way, as an intimation that we are under special and peculiar obligations to God. But we design now to discuss it with special reference to its connexion with the preceding clause. We regard it as designed to limit and qualify the injunction contained in the former part of the verse;—to inform us, in short, that while we are under obligations to our civil rulers, we are under still higher obligations to God, and we must never allow the former to override and displace the latter. This is, evidently, the design of this phrase. On no other supposition can the introduction of this apparently irrelevant expression be satisfactorily explained.

Taking this as the evident meaning of the phrase, our

general proposition is, *That our obedience and subjection to civil magistrates must always be in subserviency to the law of God*;—in other words, that we are never at liberty to render obedience to any command of the civil magistrate which is contrary to the requirements of God.

This principle is so obvious, that we need not delay long to establish it. Who that professes any degree of reverence for the divine character, does not feel that every one of God's commands must, in its obligations upon us, be superior to any other law or rule whatever? Is He, indeed, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords—our supreme lawgiver and Lord—and are not the claims of His law paramount to all others? Surely no Christian professing to believe in the supremacy of Jehovah, can look, with any regard or favour, on any other law, coming in competition with his! There is such a palpable inconsistency in the supposition, that the blindest in morals cannot fail to see it. And yet there are those, even in this Christian land, who, although professing their belief in the supremacy of Jehovah, claim for human enactments a reverence superior to that which belongs to the law of God—men who will denounce and abuse the man who dares to hint that there is a Higher Law than the laws of the land! Strange as it may seem, such is the fact; and an instance of it has occurred in a place no less conspicuous than our national Legislature!

To determine our duty, when human and divine laws come in conflict, it is only necessary to ask which is the higher authority—God or man? For it is an admitted principle, that, when two laws come in conflict, that which is enforced by the higher authority must be obeyed in preference to the other. Now in the case supposed, of a conflict between the laws of God and those of man, which is the higher authority? Dare any Christian hesitate to answer? Can any *delegated* authority pretend to compete, for precedence, with the *fountain of all authority*? Such is the relative position of the government of men, and that of God. The former possesses only a delegated authority—the latter, absolute and original. The former derives all its authority from the latter. There can then be no difficulty in determining to which belongs the preference.

But, moreover, in the case supposed, human laws have not only *less* authority over us than the laws of God, but they have, *absolutely, none at all*:—they are, in reality, *a nullity*. Civil government has no authority beyond the limits which God has assigned her, which include only the enactment and enforcement of laws connected with man's temporal affairs. She cannot invade the rights of conscience, nor interfere with the duties man owes to his God. To do this, would be, in fact, invading the citadel of heaven, and wresting from God a power which He has delegated to none—the dominion over the conscience. He claims this as His exclusive prerogative. Any effort, therefore, on the part of government, to assume it, is a departure from her proper sphere of action, which absolves the subject from all allegiance to her, in that particular.

Is any farther evidence necessary to prove that we are under no obligations to obey the civil law, when it comes in contact with the divine?—refer, for a moment, to some scripture examples.

When the three children were commanded by their civil ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, to bow down and worship the image which he had set up, what was their conduct? Did they regard that law as obligatory upon them? No! they boldly answered to the tyrant's threats—"Be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the graven image which thou hast set up." And fearlessly they entered the blazing furnace, rather than compromise their consciences by obedience to the unholy enactment.

When Daniel was forbidden, by a civil law, to pray to his God for the space of thirty days, did he tamely submit to the prohibition? Far from it. He went into his house, and with his windows open to Jerusalem, kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he had done aforetime.

When Peter and John were commanded, by the council of Jerusalem, to abstain from speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus, what was their reply? A truly noble and faithful one, which well deserves to be adopted by every Christian—"We ought to obey God rather than men."

We think then it is clear that no civil law, contravening the law of God, can be binding on us, or should be obeyed.

But what shall we do in such cases?—Shall we violently resist the enactments of government?—Shall we rebel? No.—Such a course of action, we have already said, is to be pursued only in extreme and extraordinary cases. We should, however, at all hazards, decline all active obedience to the law, and if pursued with its penalties, endure them with Christian patience. This is the course of action suggested by the examples to which we have referred. They refused obedience to the laws, but submitted to the penalty. In doing thus, we escape, on the one hand, the charge of disobedience to God, and on the other, that of resisting a divine ordinance. Thus we may preserve a conscience void of offence, and, at the same time, discharge our civil duties.

But passive non-compliance is not our whole duty, in reference to wicked laws. We must also use all our endeavours, as Christians and patriots, to have such laws *repealed*. If they are opposed to the law of God, and if we reverence and love that law as we profess, surely we cannot rest contented, while any lawful effort, on our part, to obtain their repeal remains untried. And, thanks to the republican spirit of our institutions, we may do much in reference to this matter. We can make our voices heard in our national councils by petition. We can enforce these petitions by our votes at the ballot-box; and we can give force and efficiency to both these means by fervent efforts at the Throne of Grace. And these efforts we will employ, if we truly love the cause of God and of our country. If we have the spirit of Christians and patriots, we cannot be indifferent to the existence of laws which dishonour God, and disgrace our land. It will be our earnest effort to remove every hinderance which stands in the way of the favour of God to us as a nation—to harmonize the law of the land with his requirements.

We shall only detain you, farther, to notice briefly a case of late occurrence which forms both an illustration and the application of this part of our subject.

A law, as you are aware, has recently been enacted by the Congress of the United States, providing, by the most stringent measures, for *the recapture of fugitive slaves*. By the provisions of this law, any person, claimed as a fugitive, may be taken before an irresponsible officer, appointed for the purpose, and there—on the one-sided testimony of the claimant; without the privilege of producing opposing evidence; denied the right of trial by jury, and forbidden to appeal to any other tribunal—he may be delivered up and carried away to a bondage worse than that of Egypt. In order too that this law may be effectually carried out, the commissioner is bribed with an additional fee, for every verdict pronounced in favour of the claimant. The citizens of the land, too, are required to aid in the recapture, and subjected to ruinous penalties, should they refuse their aid, or in any way, countenance the escape of the fugitive.

Such are the main features of this law; and now we ask, can Christians, remembering their obligations to God, countenance or support this act, every provision of which is in direct opposition to His law? Can they be guiltless in the sight of God, if they do not, by all lawful means, oppose its execution?

Just look at it! This law requires that escaping slaves shall be delivered up to their masters, and enjoins upon all good citizens to aid in their recapture. The law of God, (Deut. xxiii. 15,) commands, “Thou *shalt not* deliver, unto his master, the servant who is escaped from his master unto thee.” Was there ever a more palpable contradiction? These laws refer exactly to the same point, and their injunctions are diametrically opposite. Which shall the Christian obey?

Again, the law of God requires us to deal our bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor, that are cast out, into our houses—that when we see the naked, we cover him, and hide not ourselves from our own flesh. But this law forbids us, under the heaviest penalties, to extend the slightest act of charity to the panting fugitive!

But we need say no more. Every thing about this odious enactment is so obviously opposed to every sentiment of humanity and religion, that no candid mind can

contemplate it, for a moment, without being convinced of its wickedness.

While, then, we render unto our Cæsar his dues, here is a particular, in which we are emphatically called upon to render to God the things that are His. We owe to God the fulfilment of his injunctions of benevolence and charity. These we must perform, whatever human laws may say to the contrary. "We ought to obey God rather than man." And, in the mean time, as Christians, and as patriots, we should use all our endeavours to have this law repealed, and thus erase, from our national fame, the infamous blot which it has stamped upon it, in the eyes of God and men.

As we love the law of God—as we love the cause of human liberty—and as we desire the welfare of our beloved country—we are called upon to use all our efforts to put down this odious enactment. And if we possess the spirit of philanthropy—of patriotism—and of Christianity—these efforts cannot, and will not be withheld.

In conclusion—let us remember, we are responsible to God for the performance of our civil duties, as well as those which have more immediate reference to Him.

## SERMON V.

### THE SINNER'S INABILITY.

JOHN vi. 44. "*No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.*"

THE doctrines of the gospel are all, in their nature and effect, peculiarly humbling to the natural pride of the human heart. The great system of salvation, concerning which they treat, was designed, not merely to rescue the sinner from his lost and miserable condition, and restore him to happiness, but to do so, in such a way, that throughout the work, the pride of human glorying might be utterly abased, and God alone might be exalted. That system, in every step of its development, presents God as its only author and executor. Not only



does it remind us that to Him belongs the exclusive honour of originating and preparing this salvation, but it also ascribes to Him the work of applying and finally completing it, in every individual instance. Thus it utterly deprives the redeemed sinner of every ground of boasting or glorying in himself, and teaches him, in reference to all the steps of his redemption, to say, "Not unto us, O Lord; not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory, for thy mercy, and thy truth's sake." Thus it lays the foundation for that maxim of humility which it so frequently inculcates, "Let no man glory in himself; but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

This feature of the gospel system of salvation, however, although it is one of the most distinctly revealed, is one which is, perhaps, more bitterly hated and opposed, by men in general, than any other. Whatever comes in contact with our natural pride and self-complacency, is necessarily repulsive to the carnal mind. Hence the idea of our being entirely helpless in ourselves, and wholly dependent on the grace of God for salvation, has come to be so generally disliked and rejected. Even by many who profess to receive the scriptures as a revelation from God, and an unerring standard of truth, this doctrine, there so plainly taught, has been either unequivocally denied, or explained away, until it is divested of all its meaning. Boldly claiming to be wise above what is written, many have arraigned this doctrine as unreasonable in itself, and injurious in its effects—as opposed to true philosophy, and as calculated to delude men to their own destruction. And yet we may fearlessly assert that there is not a doctrine more distinctly revealed, throughout the word of God, than this; and more than this—there is not one which, when properly understood, is more obviously harmonious with true philosophy, and more beneficial in its influence on the sinner's heart.

We need not delay to prove that this doctrine—of the sinner's utter impotence in himself, and his entire dependence on the power of God, for salvation—is contained in the passage which we have read, as the subject of discourse. It is asserted in terms, the force of which can neither be misunderstood nor successfully evaded.

"No man can come unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." The words, it will be observed, are the language of our Lord to the Jews, who had been contending with him, in regard to the representation which he had just given of his own character. He had described himself as the "bread which came down from heaven," thus figuratively setting forth, at the same time, his heavenly origin, and his adaptation to the spiritual necessities of mankind. The Jews, not understanding the twofold nature of our Lord, were offended at this saying, because it came in direct conflict with what they knew concerning him, as man. "Is not this Jesus," said they, "the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?"

It was in answer to this objection that our Lord announced the universal truth contained in our text. "Murmur not among yourselves. No man cometh unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." That is, the doctrines which I have been inculcating are indeed mysterious, and hard to be understood; in fact, they are entirely above the comprehension of the mere natural man,—they are spiritually discerned, and nothing but the communication of spiritual discernment can enable you to understand and appreciate them. Murmur not, therefore, at things which you cannot understand, but rather apply for wisdom to him who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not, and by his grace you will be enabled to come unto me—to acquiesce in my doctrines, and rely upon my mediation.

Such, we apprehend, is the general meaning of the passage. It is a warning to the Jews, against trusting in their own wisdom or power; and a direction to all to apply to God for that grace which alone can efficiently bring us unto Jesus.

The doctrine of the passage is stated, with sufficient clearness, in the words themselves. "No man can come unto Christ, except the Father draw him." In other words, a special interposition of divine power is essential to induce any sinner to believe on the Saviour.

I. In order to illustrate and establish this doctrine, it will be necessary to inquire into the nature of the change, here spoken of under the title of "*coming to Christ.*"

It is scarcely necessary to observe that, by this phrase, our Lord just intended *the work of conversion*. Thus that change is designated throughout the Scriptures. It is just a sinner's being convinced of his sinfulness and misery—his helplessness and hopelessness in himself, and, under that conviction, being brought to fly to Jesus as his Saviour, and fix all his hopes on him.

This change, we remark further, in general, is entirely a spiritual one. It does not consist in any mere outward or physical acts, but in the exercises and emotions of the mind and heart. And it is important to bear this fact in mind, in order that we may understand why it is, that man is so utterly unable to accomplish this change on himself. Were conversion simply a change of conduct,—a reformation of outward manners—the language of our text would not be applicable. For Scripture and observation both convince us that men *may* change their outward conduct, without having enjoyed any special interposition of divine grace. But the change here spoken of is one of a spiritual nature. It is a change of heart—a renovation of the soul, or moral nature—a transformation of all the powers and tendencies of the mind. By coming to him, our Lord evidently did not and could not mean a mere approaching to him, as a bodily attendant, during the days of his personal ministry; for thousands, doubtless, did this who were drawn by curiosity—by maliciousness—in short, by any thing else than the drawing of the Father, here spoken of. This language, evidently, must be interpreted spiritually as expressive of those moral sentiments and feelings which ought to be cherished by the sinner towards the Saviour. In other words, it is chiefly the *act of faith in Christ*, which is thus designated. To define it more particularly, we remark,

1. That coming to Christ implies *a conviction of our natural estrangement from God, and of the misery of that condition*. Our Lord presents himself to us, in the gospel, as the way to the Father, and it is in this character that he invites us to come to him. He reveals himself as a Mediator, through whose merits and intercession we may return to God, and find acceptance. But in order that we may be disposed to avail ourselves of

this privilege, it is evidently necessary that we feel that we are, by nature, strangers to God—that we are rebels, and enemies to him, and regarded by him as such. If we were not convinced of our distance from God, and of the unhappiness of that condition, we could not appreciate or accept the offers of Christ, to *restore us* to his favour. Nor could we appreciate or avail ourselves of such offers—even though we knew we were without God, unless we felt the positive misery of that condition. No one will thank you for a *remedy*, who is not conscious of a *disease*. We must therefore know, not only that we are diseased with sin, but also that that disease is deadly, before we can be brought to come to Christ for salvation.

And here lies one of the first and greatest difficulties in the way of the sinner's conversion. His sins have blinded his eyes, and deadened all his moral sensibilities; so that, although he is actually perishing eternally, under the influence of sin, he is wholly unconscious of the fact. He sees not that sin has robbed him of all his moral beauty, by erasing the image of God from his soul. He sees not that sin has deprived him of his title to eternal life. He feels not that sin, like a venomous serpent, is gnawing his vitals, and infusing a mortal poison into the life-blood of his soul. These things, however, he must know, or he will not, cannot come to Jesus Christ. It is his office to save sinners, and to save them from sin. But surely they who discern neither danger in the state, nor deformity in the character of a sinner, who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues—will not, while under the influence of such views, look upon the gospel salvation as any favour. The first work, therefore, of the Spirit of God, in drawing sinners to Christ, is to convince them of sin. Until this is done, not one will ever come to him for salvation.

2. Coming to Christ implies *a conviction of our own inability to save ourselves*. As long as the sinner cherishes the delusion, that he can, by his own efforts, provide for himself the salvation he needs,—so long he is utterly indifferent to the calls of the Saviour to come to him. Naturally inclined, as men are, to cherish exalted views of their own ability, and to seek their own glory in all

they undertake—a conviction of their lost and miserable condition, by nature, in the first instance, only excites them to earnest and laborious exertions to save themselves. In order, then, to bring the sinner to Christ for salvation, another step in the process of conviction must be taken. He must be brought to see that he is not only guilty and miserable, but also helpless. He must be convinced that there are difficulties in the way of his salvation, which he, of himself, is utterly incompetent to remove. He must be convinced that, by the fall, he has lost all moral power—that he is, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, and that, consequently, without Christ, he can do nothing. Let him be convinced of these things—and then hold up before his view the nature and extent of the work to be accomplished, in order to his salvation—let him understand the fearful nature of that penalty which the law requires of him, as an expiation of his just sins—let him realize the perfection of that obedience to the law which he must render for the future—let him understand and realize these things, and then he is prepared to apply to some other Saviour. But until he is thus convinced of his own helplessness, he will not come to Christ. He will labour in his own strength, and finally perish in his misery.

3. Coming to Christ implies *a recognition of him as a Saviour adapted to our necessities*. To induce any one to apply to a deliverer, for relief in time of trouble, it is evidently not only necessary that he be convinced of his misery and helplessness, but also of the ability and willingness of the proposed deliverer to afford that relief. This conviction, accordingly, constitutes an essential item in the exercise of coming to Christ. The sinner must be brought to recognise him as a Saviour who is adapted to his necessities, before he will come to him for salvation. Aroused to a sense of the immense importance of being saved, and the fearful consequences of trusting a vain, false confidence, the sinner who is under the influence of the Spirit cannot be persuaded to embrace any plan of salvation, until he is convinced of its exact adaptation to his wants, and of its entire reliability. This conviction takes possession of his mind, in regard to the

Lord Jesus Christ. He sees him declared by the word of God an all-sufficient Saviour. He sees him there represented as invested with all the attributes and powers necessary to enable him to save to the uttermost, and as having already accomplished every thing necessary to this result. He hears the testimony of all who, in like circumstances with himself, have tested his saving ability; and that testimony is, that none who put their trust in him are ever put to shame. He is therefore convinced that Jesus Christ is the very Saviour he needs. He recognises him, with cordiality and delight, as the rock of his salvation, and says, with regard to the gracious covenant in which he is revealed and offered, "It is all my salvation and all my desire."

4. Coming to Christ implies *an unreserved commitment of ourselves and all our interests into his hands—a trusting on him alone for salvation*. Convinced of his own misery and helplessness, and recognising Christ as the suitable, and the only suitable Saviour, the sinner finds nothing else practicable but to roll his burdens on him. The views which he has had of himself and of Christ, leave him no alternative. "Lord, to whom shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Renouncing all self-dependence—all trust in his own merits and ability—all confidence in the vain refuges of the world—he reposes all his hopes on his Almighty Saviour. Henceforth he goes in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only. Henceforth he glories only in the cross of Christ. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And while the sinner thus comes to Christ, in the way of fixing all his trust upon him, he, at the same time, yields himself to his service. He feels that he is not his own. "To him to live is *Christ*." The love of Christ constrains him to live unto him who died for him and rose again.

Such is *coming to Christ*:—a spiritual exercise, in which the sinner bases all his hopes of salvation on Him and consecrates himself unreservedly to His service.

II. The second general point presented in the text is *the sinner's inability of himself to come to Christ*. "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me

*draw him."* And here we remark, in general, that this inability is obviously of a moral or spiritual nature. It consists in the want of those moral sentiments which are essential to induce any one to come to Christ. It, of course, does not consist in the want of any physical ability to perform the outward acts of duty incumbent upon us. For this ability exists in all moral agents. But we have already said that coming to Christ is not a mere outward or physical act; it does not consist in the mere attendance on certain outward forms of duty. It is an internal, spiritual exercise. But mere physical ability is not adequate to the performance of a spiritual act. Strength of body, for example, will not produce love to God, faith, or any other moral sentiment. There must be spiritual ability to enable us to perform a spiritual act. Now it is the want of this spiritual ability that is charged against the sinner. Physical power he has, sufficient for the performance of all the ordinary duties incumbent on him, as to their outward form. But he lacks entirely the moral power which is necessary to enable him to believe, and to exercise those other spiritual sentiments which God requires.

This moral inability is by many ascribed wholly to the *will* of the sinner. And the reason why the sinner cannot come, is supposed by such to be, simply because he will not. And the language of our Lord, in another instance, seems to countenance this:—"Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." While, however, we may regard the great and ultimate difficulty, in the way of the sinner's conversion, as consisting in his unwillingness, it must at the same time be remembered that it is owing to a deficiency in the other faculties of the soul, that he is thus unwilling. The will is always under the control of the understanding and the affections. It is, properly, just the executive principle of the mind—that by which the dictates of the understanding and affections are carried out. Of course, then, if the will be wholly averse to the exercise of faith in Christ, it must be owing to some deficiency in the other faculties. For if the understanding and affections both harmonized with the duty of believing in Christ, the will could not but acquiesce.

We find the unbelief of sinners frequently ascribed, in the scripture, to the blindness of their minds and the hardness of their hearts. They do not know Christ—they have no spiritual discernment, by which to perceive his excellencies as a Saviour, and so they cannot come to him. Thus the apostle accounts for the unbelief of some. 1 Cor. ii. 14: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Again, their hearts are averse to the Saviour—their depraved affections constantly incline them to reject him, and to prefer the service and pleasures of sin. Thus, our Lord accounts for the unbelief of sinners in his day. John iii. 19: “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

While, then, we admit that the great difficulty in the way of the conversion of the sinner lies in his own will, and that he cannot come to Christ simply because he *will* not, it must also be borne in mind that this determination of the will is no mere caprice, which may be reversed at pleasure, but is a firm and established determination, resulting necessarily from the state of the other faculties, and incapable of being changed, unless those other faculties be first renewed. As long as the understanding is blinded, and the heart hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin, so long the will is necessarily averse to coming to Christ; and in a moral sense it is absolutely true that the sinner cannot come.

Such then is the character of the natural heart every where. It is depraved and vitiated by sin, so that it is utterly incapable, in itself, of exercising the first believing emotion in reference to the Saviour. This, be it observed, is the universal fact—“*No man can come,*” &c. There may be differences among men as to mental and moral power, but here is an act which is alike beyond the reach of all. It is a characteristic of human nature, and applies to that nature wherever it is found. “*No man can come unto me.*”

And if we ask any further evidence of the truth of this declaration, than that which the text affords, we may find it in



many other passages. "Ye are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God:" Eph. ii. 8. Faith is synonymous with coming to Christ. The ability to exercise this faith is said to be, not of ourselves, but of God—in other words, we, of ourselves, cannot believe. Again, we are told, Rom. viii. 7, that "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." But the law requires faith; to this the carnal mind cannot be subject—cannot believe. "Without me," says our Lord, "ye can do nothing." Of course the ability of believing, then, is foreign to the sinner himself.

From these and numerous similar declarations, it is apparent that the sinner, in himself, is utterly helpless. Not only can he not work out a salvation for himself, but he cannot even, of his own power, avail himself of the salvation offered. He can neither save himself, nor can he come to Christ.

What use then, it may be said, can there be in the sinner's troubling himself about salvation, since he is so utterly unable to do any thing to obtain it? And why offer this salvation to sinners, if they possess no power to receive it? We answer, man is indeed helpless in himself, but his case is not therefore hopeless. He cannot indeed of himself, come to Christ; yet there is an influence provided which will accomplish this. *The Father draws.*

III. *The nature of this influence, on the part of the Father,* will constitute the third and last topic of discussion. "No man can come unto me, *except the Father who hath sent me draw him.*" We need scarcely remark that this drawing of the Father is a spiritual influence exerted on the soul. No other kind of drawing would meet the wants of the sinner. The act which he is called to perform is of a spiritual nature—his own inability is in regard to spiritual power. He must therefore be drawn spiritually.

It will be farther observed that this influence is rather of an attractive than of a compulsory nature. The sinner is drawn to Christ, by the Father—not driven. The influence exerted is of a persuasive, inclining nature. It

consists in a presentation to the mind of the attractiveness of the Saviour, of his suitableness and importance to us, and of his willingness to save us. It is a drawing with the cords of love; a sweet, yet irresistible constraint which induces the sinner cordially to fall in with the gospel offers. The influence of God in drawing the sinner to Christ must not therefore be regarded as interfering, in the least, with his free agency. It is not a compulsory influence which drives the sinner to Christ in spite of his unwillingness. It comes to him, on the contrary, as a mild and gentle argument, persuading and constraining him to embrace Christ with cordiality and affection. And the sinner under this influence accordingly does so with the most entire willingness. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Observe there is power exerted to bring Christ's people to him; yet that power is exerted, not to bring them against their wills, but to make them willing. The interposing influence of God, therefore, in bringing sinners to Christ, can no more be said to destroy their free agency, than the same could be said of any other influence by which the minds of men are changed with the concurrence of the will.

To define this divine influence more particularly, we observe that the immediate agent in it is the Spirit, and that the change which it produces is the same as that which is usually termed *conversion*, *regeneration*, or *effectual calling*. It consists, in general, in three things,—the enlightenment of the understanding, the sanctification of the affections, and the renewal of the will.

1. The first step, then, in this process, is the *illumination of the understanding*. We have said that one of the chief obstacles which prevents the sinner from coming to Christ of himself, is his ignorance or blindness of mind. His mind is blinded and deluded through the deceitfulness of sin, so that he cannot perceive the excellence and comeliness of Jesus as a Saviour, and consequently feels no disposition to come to him. To draw him to Christ, then, evidently requires, in the first instance, the removal of this obstacle. The mind of the sinner must first be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; he must be enabled, to some extent, to perceive and comprehend

his excellence, before he can cordially come to him for salvation. Accordingly this drawing of the Father is explained by our Lord, in the context, to consist chiefly in this spiritual illumination. After asserting the necessity of the Father's drawing sinners, in order to bring them to himself, he adds, in the next verse, as a proof of his assertion, a quotation from the Old Testament scriptures,—“And they shall be all *taught of God.*” This teaching, then, is one of the first means by which God brings the sinner to Christ. He convinces him, by his word and Spirit, of his lost and undone condition by nature—of his absolute helplessness in himself—and of the excellence and suitableness, to his necessities, of Jesus Christ as a Saviour. Having enlightened his darkened understanding as to these important points, the way is open for his immediate acceptance of the offers of salvation. “They that *know thy name,*” says the psalmist, “shall put their trust in thee.” Our Lord speaks of such knowledge as the earnest and assurance of salvation. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Thus the first step in the conversion of the sinner is the communication of *light*. He is taught savingly and effectually, by the word and Spirit of God, to know himself—his nature, duty, and destiny, and Christ Jesus, in all his attractiveness and excellence. We find believers thus explaining the change which has been wrought upon them—“God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

2. God draws sinners to Christ *by renewing and sanctifying their affections*. The hardness of the heart, we have seen, is another of the principal difficulties which lie in the way of the sinner's conversion. He is not only without light as to divine things, but he hates the light, and if left to himself, will not come to it. His carnal mind is enmity against God. No matter how much theoretical knowledge he may possess, his affections, his depraved inclinations and desires, overrule all the dictates of his better judgment, and prevent him from coming to

Christ. Hence, God, in order to draw sinners to Christ, must not only operate on the *understanding*, but also on the *heart*; he must not only give *light*, but *love*. And this, accordingly, he promises: "A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Thus he not only enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ, but he also renews the affections, and prepares them for embracing him. To all sinners, in their natural condition, Jesus Christ is as a root out of dry ground, having neither form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, on account of which he should be desired. But when the influence of God, through the Spirit, is exerted upon them, to bring them to him, then he at once becomes, in their eyes, altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand. Then their hearts are ravished with his beauty, and, henceforth, they count all things else but loss, for the excellency of his knowledge.

3. God draws the sinner to Christ by *transforming his will*. The will, we have already said, constitutes the ultimate obstacle in the way of the sinner's conversion. Whatever other difficulties may exist, this constitutes, at all times, the immediately preventing obstacle: "Ye *will* not come to me, that ye might have life." This faculty of the soul, therefore, must also be renewed, before the sinner is prepared to come to Christ. The promise is—"Thy people shall be *willing*, in the day of thy power." Not only shall they be taught of God, and thus made theoretically acquainted with the Saviour, in all his excellence and loveliness, not only shall their depraved affections be renewed and sanctified, and they thus rendered capable of appreciating and loving him, but their *wills* also shall be brought, by the same divine influence, to an actual determination in his favour, and immediately they shall resolve, and act upon the resolution, to come to him with all their heart, and base upon him all their hopes of salvation.

Thus the divine influence completes the work. It acts efficiently upon all the faculties of the soul, and enables and disposes them all to unite in the sincere and earnest exercise of faith upon the Son of God. It first pre-

pare the way by the illumination of the understanding, and then by the renewal of the affections, and finally completes the work by actually disposing the will to acquiesce in the Saviour's gracious offers.

Thus the Father *draws*, not compulsorily, but by a sweetly constraining influence, which gently harmonizes all the powers of the soul in obedience to His will. Mysterious is this influence in its nature, yet none the less real: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." And it is essential. Without it, no man can come to Christ. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Learn, 1. How helpless man is. Not therefore absolved from obligation to effort. The man with a withered hand, &c.

2. The importance of cherishing a deep sense of our dependence on God.

3. The necessity of seeking help from God.

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## SERMON VI.

### CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH.

JUDE 3. "*Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.*"

THERE is perhaps no attitude or character in which the saints of God are more frequently represented, in scripture, than that of soldiers; or persons engaged in an active, earnest contest. While it is true that the gospel inculcates a universal sentiment of love and kindness towards all, enjoining upon its subjects to live peaceably with all men, and rebuking and denouncing, in the most emphatic manner, all angry and hostile passions, at the same time, it uniformly represents the Christian as engaged in a warfare, from which he may not, and must not, seek to be relieved. "Fight the good fight of faith," is one of its great injunctions, the obligation of which extends to every disciple of Christ. The nature and cha-

racter of this warfare, however, are distinctly pointed out, and are essentially different from that carnal warfare and contention which are every where so clearly denounced. It is a fight of *faith*—a *spiritual* warfare—a contention in which all our objects and ends, all our weapons, all our efforts and exertions, must be of a spiritual, heavenly character. “The weapons of our warfare,” says the apostle, “are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.” “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against *spiritual wickedness* in high places.”

Spiritual, however, as this warfare is, it is none the less a *warfare*. It is a position in which enemies are to be met—enemies, varied, numerous, and powerful—a position requiring of us a firm, unflinching defence of important posts against all assaults, and a position in which offensive attacks are required of us, against all the strongholds and fortresses of the enemy. Let no one imagine that the Christian life is one of inactivity, or slothful repose. On the contrary, it is one requiring constant and untiring activity. Every Christian is a soldier for Jesus Christ, enlisted in his cause, against all his enemies, and bound by every tie of obligation to his Lord to fight constantly and earnestly for the maintenance of his cause.

The enemies with whom the Christian, in this warfare, is called to contend, are, as we have already remarked, numerous and varied in their character. They embrace all varieties of spiritual opposition, from the great enemy, the prince of darkness, down through all the grades of errorists and irreligionists in the world, to the remaining corruptions which still struggle in his own heart, against the obedience of Christ. And with all these enemies we must meet and contend; for they are all equally enlisted against that cause which we are engaged to defend.

One of the forms of this opposition to the cause of Christ, which we have mentioned, is that maintained by errorists and irreligionists in the world; and there is perhaps none against which the Christian is called more earnestly to contend. The opposition of these enemies being directed against the very basis of the Christian

system, and calculated, if carried out, to overturn the whole structure, it becomes important, if we would defend the cause of Christ, that they should be met and resisted. And moreover, these enemies being open and public in their operations, and not, like others, involved in darkness, the path of duty, in reference to them, becomes more clear and distinct, and the obligation more imperative. Accordingly our attention is frequently directed to these enemies in the Scriptures, and we are exhorted earnestly to contend against them.

It is to this peculiar form of the Christian warfare that the apostle evidently refers in our text. He represents the matter of our contention as *the faith*—the doctrines and truths of the gospel. These truths or doctrines he represents as having been denied or perverted by enemies, and therefore he enjoins, upon the saints whom he addresses, the duty of resisting these enemies, and, in opposition to them, contending earnestly for the truth.

It is supposed, (and indeed the epistle itself indicates it,) that this brief epistle was written at a time when various errors were widely prevalent in the church; when false and heretical teachers were busily engaged in disseminating error, and endeavouring to overthrow the faith of the gospel. Accordingly the apostle refers to this circumstance in the verse succeeding our text, giving it as the reason why he thought it necessary to write this epistle; verse 4th: "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." It is not easy now to determine who these errorists were, or what peculiar forms of error they held. Suffice it to say, however, their opinions and teachings, whatever they were, were contrary to "the faith once delivered to the saints." This circumstance was sufficient to induce the apostle to raise his warning voice against them, and to exhort Christians to resist and contend against their errors. And his exhortation is evidently as applicable to the church at the present day, as at any former period. The circumstance on which it was based still exists. The faith once delivered to the saints

is controverted and perverted; enemies yet exist, even in the pale of the visible church; every variety of effort is exerted to overthrow the faith of the gospel. Under such circumstances it becomes the duty of the church, and of believers individually, to contend, and contend earnestly, for the faith once delivered to the saints. Thus only can it be maintained pure and entire.

Two topics, in general, demand our attention in the words before us.

I. What is this faith once delivered to the saints?

II. Our duty in reference to it—“*earnestly contend.*”

I. We shall endeavour to illustrate briefly *the subject matter* of this contention.

1. We remark, in general, that it is *truth*—doctrines or principles which are to be believed. The term *faith* is used in a variety of senses in the Scriptures. Its more common signification is, that act of the soul by which the doctrines of the gospel are received and embraced. But the term is also frequently used in an objective sense, to denote *the thing believed*. Thus we are told (Gal. i. 23,) that Paul “preached the faith which once he destroyed”—that is, he maintained and defended the truths he once opposed. In this sense the term is frequently used, and in this sense it is to be understood in our text. It refers to those truths or doctrines which are the proper *objects* of faith; which are worthy to be received and believed.

The first idea, then, contained in this representation of the matter for which we are to contend, is that it is *doctrinal truth*. It is a very popular opinion, at the present day, that the reception and maintenance of correct theories or opinions in reference to matters of religion is a matter of but little importance, or, as it is frequently expressed, that it matters little what a man *believes*, if his *practice* be correct. But this opinion is both absurd in itself and pernicious in its effects. It overlooks or disregards a great first principle, which may be regarded as an axiom in morals—that correct principles are the essential basis of correct practice. No man’s conduct was ever really better than his principles. For what is conduct or practice, but the external representation, the



visible effect of motives and principles within? A man may indeed act the hypocrite—assume an external sanctity, while his heart is corrupt, but no one will contend for such conduct. A good, honest, consistent, external practice, however, is uniformly the result of correct doctrinal principles received and embraced. We do not say, indeed, that correct theories will always produce correct practice. They may be, and too often are, inoperative, existing only in the head, and affecting not the life. But we do assert that they are essential to it—that without them, the life and conduct cannot be correct.

We need not detain to confirm this truth by argument. Every one, at all acquainted with the nature of the human mind, and with the connexion which exists between the will, determining our actions, and the actions themselves, must see the necessity of that will being under the control of correct moral principles, in order that the actions which it determines may be correct. They are as essential to external morality as the purity of the fountain is to the clearness of its streams. Hence the frequency and urgency with which the Scriptures enforce upon us the duty of receiving and believing the truth. Their great ultimate object is to correct the morals of mankind, to promote external holiness, but they would effect it through the medium of the heart and conscience. They endeavour, in the first place, to enlighten the understanding with doctrinal knowledge; then to bring this knowledge to bear upon the heart and conscience, and thus to operate on the will, causing it to determine the conduct of the individual accordingly. And a morality thus produced is genuine; is permanent. But in no other way can such morality be produced.

We are, then, to contend for *truth*—to endeavour to maintain *doctrinal truth* in its purity; for it is the great instrument of God in sanctifying sinners. “Sanctify them through thy *truth*.”

2. *Gospel truth*—“once delivered to the saints.” This expression seems to be thrown in to define, more particularly, what faith, or what truth it is, we are to receive, and for which we are to contend. It is not merely any doctrine or principle which may be true in itself, or which

we may judge worthy of being believed; but it is "that form of doctrine which was delivered us." As it is for Christ that we are to contend, it evidently belongs to him to fix the objects for which we are to contend. This he has done, by delivering to us, in his word, a complete system of truth—a statement of all the doctrines and principles which he would have us believe and maintain. This is the faith once delivered to the saints, as the banner under which, and in defence of which, they were to fight; and it was *once* delivered, to intimate that it is *complete*—a system to which nothing is to be added, and from which nothing is to be taken away. In our contending for truth, this is our rule or standard—the doctrines and precepts of the word of God. We are not at liberty to make our own terms. In contending in behalf of our sovereign, we must contend for those objects which he has set before us; we are not at liberty to adopt principles or make issues upon our own discretion. This is a principle so obvious that it needs no illustration. What would we think of an army sent out by their sovereign, with certain specific instructions, as the objects for which they should fight, who would disregard their instructions, and make for themselves other issues with the enemy? Such soldiers would evidently expose themselves to the wrath of their sovereign. And similar is the conduct of the church of Christ, and similar will be the result, when she transcends his instructions, and, passing over the faith delivered to the saints, assumes and contends for any other principle, not contained therein. "In vain," says our Lord, "do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The opinions of men must have no place in fixing the terms of this contest for truth. "What saith the scriptures?" or, "what doth the Lord our God require of us?" are the only questions we are to ask in reference to the matter. Wherever, then, a principle or practice is assumed and contended for, not founded on this rule, it is unwarranted, and the contending, according to the decision of our Lord himself, is worshipping him in vain. "To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

3. It includes the *whole* truth. Whatever belongs to the faith once delivered to the saints is, according to the injunction of our text, to be contended for, and maintained. The apostle makes no distinction between *smaller* and *greater* truths—requiring us to contend earnestly for the one, and indifferently for the other; but he includes all in the same injunction. And there is no ground for any such distinction. They may indeed differ as to relative importance, but as to their obligations on us, they are identical. They are all the commands of the same God, and enforced by the same authority.

We are not at liberty, therefore, for the sake of accomplishing any other object, ever to suppress, or refuse to contend for any truth contained in the faith once delivered to the saints. The same obligation which binds us to maintain one, extends to all. The same command enforces them, and the same results are involved in them, the glory of God, and the good of men. The principle laid down by the apostle James will apply to this subject as well as to any other: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all." That is, applying it to the case in hand, whosoever shall maintain the whole truth of God, failing wilfully and knowingly in *one* point, is guilty of all. He has slighted the authority by which all are sustained. Our Lord describes his friends as those who do *whatsoever* he commands them; and this evidently applies as well to their belief and maintenance of his truth, as to their practice of his precepts. The apostle Paul describes the character of a faithful witness for Christ, when he asserts, in regard to himself, that he had not shunned to declare *all* the counsel of God; and it was only in so doing, that he, as a minister of the gospel, could claim to be free from the blood of souls.

We learn, then, from these declarations, that, in contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, the *whole truth of God* demands our attention: no part is to be set aside as useless or unimportant.

Again; in contending for these truths, we must have respect to their relative importance and seasonableness. All truths do not require the same effort to maintain

them; nor do the same truths at all times. When a truth is particularly opposed, it requires particular defence. The *present truth*—that which circumstances render specially important *now*, must have the primary place in our defence. Rightly dividing the word of truth is a duty not to be overlooked.

II. Our *duty*, in reference to this faith—"Earnestly contend," &c. It is implied, in this exhortation, that there is *opposition* to the truth. Were this not the case, there would be no propriety in the exhortation. It would be absurd to enjoin contention for a truth which is universally admitted and received. But this is not the case with any of the truths contained in the faith once delivered to the saints. All of them have their enemies. All are, by one class or another, perverted and denied. In order, then, that the truth may be maintained in its purity, it becomes necessary that its friends earnestly contend for it, that they meet and steadfastly resist all the efforts of its enemies, either to overthrow or pervert it. Accordingly the apostle states the circumstance, that opposition exists, as the basis or reason of his exhortation: v. 4, "For there are certain men crept in unawares," &c.

In order that we may understand the duty here enjoined upon us, three general topics require our consideration. 1. Some things pre-supposed or implied. 2. The means by which we are to contend; and 3. The manner.

Some things pre-supposed.

1. The exhortation pre-supposes that we *know* the truth. Personal knowledge of the truth is essentially pre-requisite to any proper contending for it. It will be remembered that this contest is a spiritual one; it is one which is to be maintained, not by carnal weapons, but by argument. It is by the exhibition, the manifestation of the truth, and the maintenance of it by reason and the word of God, that we are to contend. The weapon put into our hands is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Now to wield this weapon aright, we must evidently have an accurate acquaintance with it. Without such knowledge, we must, as the apostle expresses it, "Fight

as one that beateth the air." Knowledge is necessary to enable us to understand our own position; to know for what we are contending; to understand the position and efforts of the enemies of the truth; and to be prepared to meet them, and to enable us to properly use those means of defence which God has given us. And without such knowledge, it is evidently worse than useless for an individual to attempt to maintain the truth. His ignorance will necessarily involve him in shameful defeat. The apostle speaks in terms of honest indignation of some who desired to be teachers of the law, and public contenders for the faith, yet understanding not what they said, nor whereof they affirmed. Our Saviour's exhortation is, "Search the scriptures." If you would contend for the truth, make yourself acquainted with it; if you would know it, search the scriptures. They contain the faith once delivered to the saints. Examine them, therefore, diligently, that you may intelligently contend for it.

2. *Faith* is pre-supposed. The Christian warfare is expressly termed a *fight of faith*; and that, not only to intimate that the matter in dispute is the faith, but also that the combatants are actuated by the spirit of faith. It is because they have believed the truth, and embraced it, that they engage in its defence. "We, having the same spirit of faith," says the apostle, "according as it is written, I *believed*, and *therefore* have I spoken, we also *believe*, and *therefore* speak." And it is only when our contending for the truth is founded on the previous reception and belief of it, that it is recognised as acceptable. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." To contend for a truth we do not ourselves believe is rank hypocrisy. Surely no one could offer such service to God with any hope of acceptance. To contend properly for the truth, therefore, it is not only necessary that we *know* it, but also that we *believe* it; that we receive and embrace it as the truth; that we be able to say, in justification of our contending, "I *believed*, and *therefore* have I spoken."

3. It is pre-supposed that we *value* and *love* the truth. Truth is often known and believed, and yet esteemed as of but little or no importance. Those who regard it thus evidently cannot and will not earnestly contend for it.

They may indeed embrace it, and uphold it against error, but if they are not actuated by love to the truth itself, their contending will be but a mere hypocritical formality. It is impossible for an individual to contend earnestly and sincerely for a matter in which he feels no interest. To fulfil the exhortation of the text, then, we must previously have received, not only the truth, but the love of it. We must be of the number of those who value the truth, who estimate it as precious and worthy to be contended for. Like the Psalmist, the sentiment of our hearts must be, "O how I *love* thy law!" "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." Thus estimating the faith, we will have a motive to prompt us to contend for it, and will thus be prepared to contend earnestly and sincerely.

II. The *ways or means* by which we are to contend. When we are about to engage in conflict, it is important and necessary to our success that we have a plan of operations before us. We must know the method or means by which we are to carry on the contest; otherwise we are liable to be involved in confusion and final defeat. The means in the present instance are clearly pointed out in the word of God, and we have but to examine that chart of instruction to ascertain our duty. We propose, at present, merely to point out some of the more general and important means by which we are required to contend for the faith. And,

1. *By a public profession, in connexion with the visible church.* The church is God's organized band of witnesses. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord," is the way in which her character is represented. She was instituted for this special purpose, to be the depository of truth, and by the exhibition of this truth in a public testimony, to show forth his praise. She is styled "the pillar and ground of the truth"—that is, it is upon the church as a foundation, that the cause of truth in the world is laid, and it is by the faithful maintenance of it, on her part, that it is preserved. It is evident from this that God designed the church to be his public, organized

body of witnesses; and that to her, in this capacity, is committed, in a special manner, the duty of contending for the faith. He has given her a banner that it might be displayed because of the truth. That banner is her judicial testimony, upon which all the truths for which she contends are inscribed. When the church maintains this character, every individual member is, by his very position, a witness for those truths. His connexion with the church, maintaining the truth, places him before the world as its friend and supporter.

And it was for this purpose that the church was organized, that thus Christ's friends might be marked out, distinguished from the world, and known as his witnesses. Now one of the ways in which an individual may contend for the truth is by connecting himself with this public, organized body. Having done so, his very position testifies for the truth. The world, knowing the church to be the public supporter of the truth, and seeing him associated with that church, will recognise in him a believer and defender of the faith. Thus an individual may confess Christ before men, and show that he is not ashamed of him or his words. And, in doing so, he contends for the faith; as far as the influence of his position goes, it is for truth.

And this is a duty of primary importance. The soldier who would fight orderly in his master's cause, will see, in the first place, that his name is enrolled in the regular army. And similar is the conduct of the consistent soldier of Christ. He will endeavour to find a name and place in the church.

We might remark further here, that as the church is now divided into various branches, differing with regard to what is the truth, it is the duty of every one who would contend faithfully, to connect himself with that branch which he finds—by a comparison of their standards with the word of God—most faithfully maintains the truth. Connexion with a church which maintains error, or neglects to maintain any part of the faith, involves us in her delinquencies. It becomes every Christian, then, to see that his position as a member of any branch of the church does not make him a witness for error, or involve

him in the neglect of any part of the faith once delivered to the saints.

2. *By the exertion of our personal influence.* Whatever influence we can bring to bear for the maintenance of the truth, in our private intercourse with our fellow-men, in the way of recommending it to their favour, enforcing it on their reception by reason and argument, and defending it against the attacks of error, we are required, by the injunction of the text, to render. Our public position, as members of the visible church, is not the only testimony we are to render in behalf of the cause of God. Much may be done by *individual* influence—by individuals in their intercourse with others, maintaining and enforcing the truth involved in their public testimony. The apostle enjoins it on us to “be always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh us a *reason* of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.”

Gospel ministers are required to contend for the faith, by faithfully proclaiming it; declaring the whole counsel of God, and enforcing it by all the arguments and motives contained in the Scriptures. But they, and all the members of the church, may also contend for it by embracing all suitable opportunities, in their intercourse with others, to maintain and exhibit it, in opposition to all contrary opinions. And thus will he act who contends earnestly for the faith.

3. *By our lives and conduct.* The exemplification of truth, in a holy and consistent life, is perhaps the most convincing argument that can be adduced in its favour. You may reason by theories, and even demonstrate a truth by abstract argument, and yet make no impression. In order that truth should take hold of the hearts of men, and be cordially received and embraced, it is necessary, not only that it should be clearly seen to be a truth, but also that it be realized as one of practical importance. Men generally require to see some practical benefit resulting from the principle or doctrine proposed to their belief, before they can feel interest enough in it, to embrace it with cordiality. According to a very natural rule, they judge of doctrines and principles by



their fruits. Knowing that a good tree will always bring forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree evil fruit, they look to the fruits, the results of doctrines, when they are received, to determine their character.

It is evident, therefore, that the best recommendation we can give to the truths of the gospel is to exemplify them in our lives. Let it be seen, by our lives and conduct, that their fruits are good, that they have a practical influence for good, and we sustain them with a force and power which no abstract argument can exert. If we would contend efficiently for the faith, then, we must *act it out*, and exemplify it in our lives. Live what you believe, practise what you profess; thus only will others clearly understand the nature and tendency of your faith, and realize its excellence. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

### III. The *manner* in which we are to contend.

1. *Earnestly*. It is supposed that there is here an allusion to the Grecian games, in which the contestors were accustomed to strain every nerve, and use every exertion to gain the prize. The apostles frequently refer to these games, for the purpose of illustrating the manner in which we should contend for the faith, arguing, from the earnestness and zeal with which they laboured to obtain corruptible crowns, the way in which we should seek an incorruptible. From this representation, we learn, in the present instance, that we should contend with earnestness and zeal, using all lawful and appropriate means, and using them with diligence and perseverance, to obtain our end—the triumph of truth. The injunction of the wise man is appropriate to this work—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

There are two circumstances which enforce this earnestness. 1. The importance of the work. In the maintenance and establishment of the truth, are involved the glory of God—our salvation—and the interests of a world of sinners. Let truth be overthrown, and what will be the result? It is the foundation of all our hopes; if that

foundation be destroyed, what shall we do? God's glory is eclipsed, the interests of a world destroyed. But earnestness is necessary,—2. Because of the difficulty of maintaining the truth. It has numerous enemies—strong and powerful—ever ready to trample it in the dust. It becomes its friends, therefore, to be up and doing—to put on the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand in the evil day.

2. *With meekness.* It is a mistake to suppose that faithfulness in contending for the truth requires harshness or severity of manner. Many seem to imagine that, to contend *earnestly*, they must contend with bitterness—disregarding all the laws of courtesy and kindness. But very different from this is the spirit exhibited and inculcated by the gospel. While a firm, unwavering adherence to the truth, and faithful maintenance of it against all opposition, are commended and enjoined, meekness, humility, and love are, at the same time, required. “The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.” And this instruction applies not only to gospel ministers, but to all who contend; Gal. vi. 1: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the *spirit of meekness*, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.”

3. *Believingly*—or in the way of trusting in Christ for strength. Dependence on Christ for strength is a duty enjoined on us at all times. “Without me,” says Christ, “ye can do nothing.” And accordingly we are commanded, “Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.” The people of God are represented as going “up through the wilderness of this world, leaning on their Beloved,” “going in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness.” But this exercise is especially required in reference to the duty enjoined in the text. “Who goeth a warfare at any time on his own charges?” asks the apostle. The support of the soldier is derived from the master for whom he fights. And so Christians, in

fighting the good fight of faith must depend, for their support and reward, on their Master. "Our sufficiency is of God." "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

4. *Perseveringly*. "Be thou faithful unto death." The limits of this contest are the boundaries of life. We are not to suppose our warfare accomplished, till we are summoned away from the field by the Master himself. While life remains, our armour must constantly be girded on, our banner afloat, and ourselves in readiness to fight the battles of the Lord. There must be no turning back from the conflict. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." It is recorded as an eternal shame to the sons of Ephraim that "being armed and carrying bows, they turned back in the day of battle." Such will be the conduct of no *good* soldier of Jesus Christ. Every such one will fight on, and fight ever, until, by the voice of death, his Master bids him retire. And only thus can any one hope to receive the soldier's reward. "Be thou *faithful unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life." "He that *endureth to the end* shall be saved."

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## SERMON VII.

### CURSE YE MEROZ.

JUDGES v. 23. "*Curse ye Meroz, said the Angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.*"

THE words of our text, it will be observed, are a part of the song of triumph with which Deborah the prophetess, and Barak the son of Abinoam, celebrated their signal victory over the Canaanites. The circumstances of this victory were briefly these. The children of Israel, on account of their multiplied and aggravated sins against God, had been sold by him into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan. Under his iron sceptre they were mightily oppressed, we are told, for the space of twenty years.

At the end of that period, however, so intolerable had the yoke of his service become, that the unhappy bondsmen began earnestly to cry to the Lord for relief; and God, ever ready to hear the cries and respond to the prayers of the oppressed, heard their cry, and notwithstanding their former rebellion against him, and their innumerable acts of ingratitude, proceeded once more to rescue them from their grievous thralldom.

At this time there was no king in Israel, the people being ruled by a succession of judges. This office was held at this period by Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth. To her, therefore, the people came for judgment; and to her doubtless their complaints were uttered. Stirred up by these complaints, and at the same time acting under the authority of a direct command from God, Deborah undertook the arduous, and to human reason apparently hopeless, task of delivering her people from their oppressive bondage. Accordingly, to carry out her object, she sent for Barak, the captain of her host, and delivered to him the commission which she had received from God (chap. iv. 6, &c.) "Go and draw toward Mount Tabor," &c. To this commission Barak assents, upon condition that Deborah herself should personally co-operate with him in the work. To this condition the prophetess agrees, and immediately they set about preparing for the important enterprise. The hosts of Israel are gathered together, and led out, by Barak and Deborah in company, to the field of battle. On the other hand, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's hosts, gathered together his nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles, to the river Kishon. Notwithstanding the vast superiority, however, of Sisera's army over that of Barak, both in numbers and appointments, the conflict was soon decided in favour of the latter. The Lord was upon the side of his people, and, we are told, soon discomfited Sisera and all his chariots and all his hosts, with the edge of the sword before Barak. Thus a great victory was wrought in behalf of Israel, and the power of their oppressor was utterly broken and destroyed.

Having accomplished this victory, Deborah and Barak

unite in celebrating the event by a song of thanksgiving and praise, in which they not only give utterance to their own gratitude and joy, but also transmit the record of God's doings in their behalf to future generations, for the instruction and encouragement of the people of God in after times.

In this song we have in general,—sublime ascriptions of praise to God,—a more particular account of his doings in behalf of Israel,—honourable notices of the conduct of those who were immediately engaged in the conflict,—and severe reflections upon some who refused to lend their assistance when required. Without entering into a particular examination of these different items in the song, we confine our attention at present to the last.

Whilst the conduct of most of the tribes of Israel on this occasion was such as to justify the most honourable commendation, there were some amongst them who manifested a cowardice or carelessness which deserved the severest reprehension. Whilst Zebulon, and Naphtali, Ephraim and Issachar, were with Deborah and Barak, fighting valiantly for the Lord, Reuben, Dan and Asher were reposing in shameful indolence in their several borders. Accordingly the cowardice or recreancy of these tribes is held up in the song to merited condemnation.

Whilst thus noticing the unfaithfulness of these tribes in general, the song directs our attention particularly to the conduct of the inhabitants of a certain city amongst them, and denounces upon them a peculiarly bitter execration; "Curse ye Meroz," &c. What city this Meroz was, or where it was situated, or what was the general character of its inhabitants, we are not informed. It is mentioned in no other place in the Bible, that we are aware of. All that can be known about it, therefore, must be derived from the brief reference to it here. We may, however, evidently infer from the text that it was a city of some size and distinction, since considerable help seems to have been expected from it. We may also suppose that it was situated somewhere near the field of battle. This circumstance would render their recreancy more noticeable, and more culpable. Whatever may have been the size or situation of this city, however, the reason of the curse

pronounced upon them is distinctly stated, "They came not to the help of the Lord." They had been summoned; but they refused (on what grounds we are not told,) and were consequently subjected to a grievous curse. This curse, it will be observed, was not merely the denunciation of Deborah or Barak; it was commanded by the Angel of the Lord. It was therefore an authoritative execration; *the curse of God* upon that unhappy people; and doubtless it was rigidly executed. Thus a city, which was perhaps at this time one of the most flourishing and prosperous of the cities of Israel, by its recreancy to the cause of God secured its own destruction, and that of its guilty inhabitants.

Whilst, however, we condemn the conduct, and lament the unhappy but deserved fate of the inhabitants of Meroz, let us not imagine, brethren, that we have no farther interest in this event. Doubtless the curse here denounced on Meroz is recorded for our learning; and is here held forth as a beacon-light to warn us to beware of the rock on which they split. Meroz was cursed because she came not to the help of the Lord, and will not the same curse apply equally to all who follow her example? If refusing to come to the help of the Lord was sufficient to call forth the curse of God in former times; it is equally so now. It is true we are not summoned to the battle-field to defend the cause of God, against his and our enemies, by carnal weapons; yet there is a conflict still going on in the world between God and the enemies of his church, and to this conflict all who hear the gospel are summoned. "The weapons of our warfare," in this conflict, "are not carnal, but mighty through God." Nevertheless there is a solemn call from God, addressed to sinners by his word and providence, to come to his help in this spiritual contest. All are invited and commanded to array themselves on the side of God and his church, against the world, the flesh and the Devil; and those who refuse to take this position are subjected to the curse here pronounced.

In farther illustrating and applying this subject, then, we propose

I. TO INQUIRE TO WHOM THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN

OF MEROZ WILL APPLY, AT THE PRESENT:—"They came not to the help of the Lord."

II. To NOTICE THE CURSE PRONOUNCED ON SUCH:—"Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof."

I. WHO ARE THEY WHO CAME NOT TO THE HELP OF THE LORD?

To understand this, it must be borne in mind that there is a contest going on between the Lord and his enemies. This was the case when the language of the text was first uttered, and it is so still. The form of the contest is indeed different; it is not now a conflict of carnal weapons; it is no longer a "battle of the warrior, attended with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood;" it is now a spiritual or moral warfare; a contest in which our weapons are the word and Spirit of God. Yet it is none the less, on this account, *a warfare*. The lines which separate between God and his enemies are just as distinctly drawn now, as in former times. The rage and violence of the enemies of God are just as great now, as ever, and the issue of the conflict is as important now, as it was in the days of Deborah and Barak. On the part of God too, the contest is carried on by the same agents as formerly; his church or people.

Our circumstances, then, are substantially the same as those of the children of Israel, when this curse was pronounced on Meroz. There is a great battle being fought, between God and his enemies, the world, sin and Satan. That battle God fights on his part, through the agency of his people; and accordingly he has issued his summons to all who hear his word, to take up his cause and maintain it. They therefore who refuse to comply with this summons, who refuse to embrace the cause of God, or to maintain it, are properly regarded as occupying the same position with the inhabitants of Meroz.

For the sake of ascertaining more definitely who belong to this unhappy class of the gospel hearers, we propose to notice more particularly some persons who may be said to neglect this duty. And here let it be observed, that this description has special reference to nominal Christians, or to those who are living in a Christian com-

munity, and who have not openly arrayed themselves against the cause of God. For although it may be truly said of those who occupy this position of open, and decided opposition to God, that "they come not to the help of the Lord," yet such are more properly represented as those who come against the cause of God,—his enemies. They occupy the position of the Canaanites, rather than that of the Merozites. They are actually and knowingly fighting against God. Of course such are cursed of God; but their curse is of a different character, and founded upon different reasons, from that of the class which we now consider.

The persons here described are simply those who come not to the help of the Lord. It is not said that they came against Him, or that they aided His enemies, but simply that they refused their aid to Him. It is therefore with this negative, undecided, inactive class of mankind, that we have more particularly to do at present. Now who belong to this class? To answer this question, it is only necessary to inquire what is implied in coming to the help of the Lord. Those to whom this characteristic cannot be applied are involved in the curse.

Now to come to the help of the Lord includes in general three things: 1. *A cordial approbation of the Lord's cause.* 2. *A public profession of it.* 3. *An active and persevering endeavour to support it.* Those, therefore, who come short in any of these particulars, are chargeable with failing to come to the help of the Lord.

1. *They are chargeable with this sin who do not in their hearts approve, and love the cause of God.*

The cause of God, let it be observed, is the cause of truth and holiness; the maintenance of the truth of the scriptures against all error, and of holiness against all vice. Now there are many individuals in Christian communities, who, without professing any disbelief in any of the doctrines of the scriptures, or any dislike to its precepts, are yet wholly indifferent in regard to them: who feel no interest in them, and no anxiety about their maintenance. Like Gallio, they care for none of these things. If they do not openly deny or disown them, it is, perhaps, simply because they do not care enough about



them to take the trouble. God and divine things are almost, if not entirely, excluded from their thoughts; or if they think about them, it is only to amuse themselves with idle speculations, or at least satisfy conscience by an attempt to perform what they know to be duty. They find no pleasure in such thoughts; on the contrary, they are a burden to their minds, and accordingly they get rid of them as soon as possible. Now it is evident that those whose minds are thus exercised in regard to the cause of God, do not, and whilst thus exercised cannot come to the help of the Lord. To engage heartily and earnestly in any cause, we must feel an interest in it. Without this, our efforts, if we can bring ourselves to make any at all, will be weak and sickly, and will in reality be no help to the cause of God. Doubtless this was the main reason why the inhabitants of Meroz so sadly failed in their duty. They did not feel interest enough in the cause at stake, to prompt them to encounter the perils and hardships of the battle-field for its sake. They were perhaps satisfied with their bondage, or they despaired of success. At all events, their conduct manifested that they had no real, heartfelt attachment to the cause of God; else no obstacles could have prevented them from lending their assistance.

And how many are there of this class at the present day. There are thousands in Christian lands who, although secretly convinced of the truth of the scriptures, and of the importance of maintaining it, are yet entirely indifferent about it. Their hearts are so filled with the world, so taken up with the acquisition of its riches, or its honours, or the pursuit of its pleasures, that they can find no room for the cause of God. They look on the struggle going on between truth and error, between godliness and vice, between the church and the world, with entire indifference; and as far as their feelings are concerned, it matters not whether God or his foes prevail. Such persons may indeed talk about religion, they may speculate, and argue fluently enough on its abstract points; yet, at the same time, they feel no more real interest in the matter than they would in the discussion of some fanciful question. Now we need not stay to

prove that all such persons are correctly described as those who come not to the help of the Lord. For such is practically their conduct: they ordinarily *do* nothing for the cause of God; or if they do, their want of heart in the matter renders their efforts vain.

2. *They may be justly classed with the Merozites, who refuse to make a profession of the cause of God.* There are some in almost every Christian community, who bear the general name of Christians, and who perhaps persuade themselves that they are really interested in the cause of God, and are desirous that it may prosper, who nevertheless refuse to identify themselves with the disciples of Christ, or to make their position known by a public profession. They flatter themselves that they are really upon the Lord's side, and are helping on his cause in the world, although, for some reason or other, they are unwilling for the present to unite with his followers in their organized capacity. This unwillingness may arise from different causes. In general, we apprehend, it arises from indifference to the cause of God. We cannot imagine why an individual who is truly interested in divine things, should under ordinary circumstances be unwilling to make his sentiments known. It is entirely unaccountable.

Yet there are circumstances which sometimes concur with this indifference in producing this effect. Some perhaps are not convinced that this is their duty, overlooking the declaration of the apostle which unites the duty of believing and of confessing our faith inseparably together; Rom. x. 9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:" where confession is represented as just as much commanded as faith itself.

Others, again, seem to think that it is not necessary that they should connect themselves with the church in order to maintain and defend the cause of God. They rely upon their individual or personal exertions, as all that can be required of them. Now it must be admitted, by every candid reader of the Bible, that God has established a church in the world, or in other words, he has

given his followers an external organization. And for what purpose? Simply that they might be enabled in an orderly, regular, systematic, and thus efficient method, to maintain and defend his cause in the world. The church, in other words, is his organized army, to which he has committed the banner of Truth, to be by it maintained and displayed. Since then God has organized this regular army, and placed it in the field of conflict, is it not reasonable to suppose that he would desire and expect of all, who intend helping his cause, to take their places in the regular ranks? Can he regard that man as really doing service to him, who is standing aloof from his organized band, and making an occasional demonstration against the enemy on his own responsibility? The allusion is sufficient! It was a failure in this particular that called forth this curse against the Merozites. They refused to come, and join themselves to the army of Israel. Perhaps they may have persuaded themselves that it was not necessary to join the regular army; that they could do as much, and possibly more, by staying in their city, and fortifying, and defending it; and perhaps they may have been thus labouring. Yet because they did not come to the help of the Lord as he had required,—because they did not join themselves to his organized host, and co-operate with them in the conflict,—the angel of the Lord pronounces this bitter curse upon them. And the same curse, let me repeat, descends upon all who follow their example. Our Lord himself, in substance, repeats it in Matt. x. 32, 33: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.” Now, to deny Christ, according to his own interpretation, is just to refuse to confess him. “He that is not with me, is against me.” They therefore may be properly said to fail to come to the help of the Lord, who are ashamed, or unwilling to make a profession of his cause, and who will not co-operate with his organized body in its support. Let us not be understood, however, as intimating that a mere profession constitutes helping the Lord. Much more than this is

required. This, however, is included in it; and we cannot see how, under ordinary circumstances, any one can exonerate himself from the curse here pronounced, who fails in this particular.

3. *They may be classed with the Merozites, who although making a profession, are inactive, or slothful, and are doing nothing for the cause of God.* "Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants of Meroz; because they *came not to the help* of the Lord." You will observe, in this language, that the point of the charge against the Merozites was their lending no assistance to the people of God in their conflicts with the enemy. They were cursed, not merely because they did not appear in the ranks, but because they did not appear there as the helpers of their brethren. It will therefore readily be perceived, that even had they been there, they would not have been absolved from this curse unless they had been actively engaged in the conflict with the enemy. *Help* was what was required of every individual summoned, and no one would be recognised as having done a soldier's part, who had not at least rendered some assistance to the defenders of the Lord's cause.

And the same is true in regard to the spiritual conflict to which we are summoned by the gospel. The object of God in calling sinners to this contest, is not merely that they should approve his cause, and stand upon his side by profession, but that they should actively help him to maintain and establish that cause. Of course we are not to infer from this language that God needs our help, or that we are capable of doing any thing efficiently in his behalf: on the contrary, he himself assures us that he is omnipotent, and therefore needs no foreign aid, while we are helpless in ourselves, and therefore could render none. Yet in carrying on his work in the world, it has pleased God to make use of the efforts of his people, as means for effecting his purposes. He has therefore required those efforts of us, and made them, in his ordinary procedure, essential to the success of his own cause. We are therefore properly said to help God when we lend our active efforts to the advancement of his cause, because then we are furnishing him with the

means through which he ordinarily promotes his own work. Hence God so frequently, and so earnestly, enforces on our attention the duties we owe to his public cause in the world. "Go work to-day in my vineyard," is his language to every disciple. Now what we assert here is, that he who refuses to work for God—who is not endeavouring by his active efforts to further the cause of God in the world—has not come to the *help* of the Lord. He may have professed adherence to the Lord's cause, yet if he is satisfied with that profession, and makes no farther effort to build up and establish that cause in the world, he is not a helper of the Lord, and therefore is exposed to this curse. Now it is too painfully evident that there are many of this class in the visible church—many who although making a good profession, and thus having a name to live, are, as far as all active efforts are concerned, as lifeless as the most devoted worldling. If never asked to do any thing for God, such may pass along before the world smoothly and fairly. But when any important enterprise is proposed to aid the cause of God, and when their time, or money, or personal labours are required to carry out the enterprise, they hesitate. They have a great many objections to propose to the scheme; or they are not able to do any thing for it; and if finally they are persuaded to lend any assistance at all, it is done so grudgingly as to vitiate all the excellence and merit of the sacrifice. Now can such persons be truly said to have come to the help of the Lord? If they had really come with that intention, they would readily embrace every practicable opportunity of rendering such help. Instead of having to be urged and entreated to help the Lord's cause, in any particular instance, they would be ready at all times and waiting to do so. Nay, they would even be looking out for opportunities—having their hearts set upon the success of that cause, and desiring above all things to promote it. Those therefore who refuse to lend their assistance to the work of building up the Lord's cause in the world, have not come to the help of the Lord, and therefore are exposed to the curse here pronounced.

II. THE IMPORT OF THE CURSE PRONOUNCED ON THOSE WHO COME NOT TO THE HELP OF THE LORD.

We have already said that this curse is an authoritative one, being pronounced by the express command of the Angel of the Lord, or the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not therefore to be regarded simply as a prayer that such may be cursed, but rather as an authoritative declaration that they *shall* be cursed.

To *curse* is to denounce evil against any one. When the evil is merely denounced by man, it amounts to no more than a wish or prayer for its infliction; but when God pronounces an individual cursed, his malediction carries its effect with it, and accordingly secures to its unhappy victim all the miseries which the wrath of God can inflict. Now this is the character of the curse here pronounced. It is the curse of God, and of course whoever incurs that curse becomes at once exposed to all the ills it involves. We propose then to notice briefly the evils included in this bitter curse.

1. *Temporal judgments.* This, we apprehend, was part, at least, of the curse inflicted on Meroz. That city, we have reason to suppose, was at one time a flourishing and important place. But after the denunciation of this curse upon it, it at once sank to insignificance. History takes no more notice of it. Whether it was suddenly swept from existence by some overwhelming judgment, or gradually dwindled away until it ceased to be, we know not. The strong probability, from the silence of history concerning it, is, that by some temporal judgments it was wasted away and finally destroyed. And the history of the world affords us many other instances of the curse of God producing temporal judgments. The old world, which perished by the deluge—Sodom and Gomorrah—Tyre and Sidon—and numerous other cities and countries, both ancient and modern, which have been desolated by the judgments of God,—all these attest that God may, and often does, execute his curse upon nations and people, in part at least, by the infliction of temporal evils. Nor is this confined to nations; it is true also of individuals. Read the record of curses which Moses, by the command of God, pronounced on the children of Israel, in case they should disobey his law, and see if the infliction of temporal evils upon individuals did not con-

stitute an important item in those curses. (Deut. xxviii. 16—19.) And why should it be thought incredible that God should often thus execute his own maledictions? He is the God of providence, and has all the ordering and arranging of man's temporal affairs under his control. Why then may he not arrange them, when he sees fit, so as to execute his curse? Let it be observed, that we do not say that God *always* thus executes his wrath on sinners. He is sovereign, and sometimes for his own wise purposes the wicked are permitted to prosper. Yet every one who refuses to come to the help of the Lord renders himself *liable* to these temporal judgments, and he knows not how soon they may be inflicted.

2. *Spiritual judgments.* By these we intend particularly those afflictions which fall immediately upon the soul, and which consist in the withdrawal of its spiritual privileges and enjoyments, and its surrender to the power of its own lusts and passions, and to the dominion of Satan. This awful punishment has been inflicted on many, in all ages of the world, who have abused their privileges, and refused to come to the help of the Lord at his command. The apostle Paul represents God as having inflicted this judgment upon the heathen who refused to retain him in their knowledge. "God gave them over to a reprobate mind." The Psalmist notices a similar judgment denounced on the Israelites; (Psalm lxxxi. 12.) "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels." The prophet Isaiah denounces, by the command of God, a similar curse upon the Jews in his day; (Isa. vi. 10,) "Make the heart of this people fat," &c. And to this day that fearful curse rests on that unhappy people. Given up to the hardness of their own hearts, they obstinately reject all saving wisdom, and wander on in hopelessness and misery. A similar judgment was also pronounced, and afterwards executed, on the church of Ephesus. "Repent and do thy first works, else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place."

And let me add—the same curse now hangs over those who are refusing to come up to the help of the Lord. God's Spirit will not always strive with man. Grieved and

provoked by his obstinate and persevering refusal to comply with his commands, he will at length withdraw, and leave the unhappy sinner to the blindness of his own mind, and the hardness of his own heart. Destitute then of all spiritual light and comfort—borne down by the weight of his own corruption—he shall wander on in hopeless misery, and finally perish in his sins.

3. *The curse of God terminates, if unremoved, in eternal death.* “Thou shalt surely die,” was the language in which that curse was originally pronounced; and the same language it still holds. “The wages of sin is death;” and remember this is true, not merely of sins of commission, but also of those of omission. Indeed it is the latter particularly, which are specified in the final sentence; “I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat,” &c.—“Because ye did it not,” &c. This eternal curse then will rest, not merely on those who arrayed themselves against God, but on those who came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty. It attaches itself to the soul or moral nature, and its infliction will be eternal. It cuts the sinner off from all access, and all hope of access to God, as a friend, and sends the burdened soul, with all its sins and sufferings, down to the regions of interminable woe and unutterable despair! “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” is its sentence. Oh! is it not then a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? If this be the result of his curse, may we not well tremble in view of the possibility of becoming its victims?

Learn

1. The dignity of the Christian’s position—a helper of the Lord!

2. True religion is active and laborious—is no idle inactivity, or slothful repose.

3. Devotion to the service of the Lord must be voluntary—“came not.”

4. The neglect of this duty is extremely hazardous.

Who is upon the Lord’s side?



## SERMON VIII.

## CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM.

Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6. *"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."*

THIS psalm, as the matter of it indicates, was composed during a peculiarly trying season in the history of the church. It was a time of exile and bondage. Banished from their native land, by the righteous judgments of God, because of their repeated and daring sins, the afflicted Israelites were now languishing in a foreign land, under the cruel yoke of the tyrant of Babylon. Deprived of all the privileges and pleasures which, as a free and independent people, they had formerly enjoyed—separated from all the cherished scenes of their earlier years—and, what to them was still more painful than all their other deprivations, excluded from all access to the holy city, and from all participation in its sacred privileges—the lonely captives now wandered by the rivers of Babylon, the sorrowing victims of God's desertion, and man's reproach and scorn.

And a circumstance which, at the time this psalm was penned, added increased affliction to their captivity, was its lengthened and apparently hopeless duration. If the psalm was composed, as is generally supposed, near the close of their exile, nearly seventy years had already passed over them in that unhappy condition.

No wonder that, under such afflictive and discouraging circumstances, they were much cast down, and overwhelmed with sorrow. No wonder that, at such a time, the melody of praise and thanks was banished from their lips, and the wild, discordant notes of wailing and anguish were heard throughout that captive host.

In just accordance with their unhappy circumstances, therefore, is the mournful language of the psalm with which they give utterance to their feelings. Every sentence seems to come warm and glowing with the energy of grief, from hearts deeply touched with an oppressive

sense of the calamities which had befallen their unhappy land.

The psalm opens with a brief, but peculiarly touching description of the condition and feelings of the captive exiles: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." Volumes could not have portrayed their unhappy condition in a more striking and impressive manner. In a foreign land—under a foreign yoke—in the land, and under the yoke of a people whom they had always regarded as accursed—exiles far removed from their native land and former privileges—all these mournful facts are expressed in this simple allusion to the place of their present abode. "By the rivers of Babylon, *there* we sat down;" there we took up our abode. There we sat down, under the painful consciousness that our exile would be tedious and trying. But how were they employed there? What were their feelings and emotions in that captive condition? Those of mirth and rejoicing?—or of careless indifference and contentment? No! "*We wept when we remembered Zion.*" In the midst of our present desolations, the memory of the past, recollections of our native land, and of all its high and holy privileges, would come over us, and appearing in such vivid contrast with our present degradation, would often bring tears of anguish from our eyes.

And who that has the feelings of a patriot, and, much more, the sentiments of a Christian, can condemn the indulgence of this apparent weakness, or despise the tears shed by this unhappy people, banished from their native land, and from the house of God? So deep, and so all-pervading was their grief, that they could now find no satisfaction in those exercises of song and praise, in which they had formerly so greatly delighted, and in which they were still permitted by their captors to indulge. Their harps were hanged upon the willows, and when their spoilers called for mirth, and tauntingly demanded, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion," their hearts rose up in an indignant refusal. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Those harps had always been tuned to strains of triumph and rejoicing. The

songs of Zion are expressive of the liveliest faith and hope. How then can we touch those harps or sing those songs, while our hearts are bleeding under the wrongs and woes of exile and bondage? To do so, under our present mournful circumstances, would indicate a forgetfulness of our native land, and a satisfied and even happy contentment in our present exile. It would be, in effect, a renunciation of our land, and a tacit acknowledgment that we were reconciled to our captivity. But no! our hearts yet turn with fond remembrance to Jerusalem, and we cannot endure the thought of tarnishing her name and memory, by lightly exposing her sacred ordinances to the reproach and scorn of her enemies. And rather than forget Jerusalem, may our right hands forget their skill on the harp, and our tongues cleave to the roof of our mouths.

Thus the captive exiles express their strong and unalterable attachment to the city of their solemnities. Jerusalem was, to them, above their chief joy; and even now, though far removed from it, and in bondage, their hearts turned to it with a fond, affectionate remembrance. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," &c.

Thus we regard the passage as an expression of the ardent attachment of the Jew to the sacred institutions and ordinances of his religion.

But as the church in all ages is one, and the general sentiments and feelings of the people of God, in regard to it, the same, we may consider the passage as also expressive of the feelings of the Christian in reference to the New Jerusalem, or New Testament Church. Every true disciple of Christ cherishes an attachment to his organized body, the church, similar to that which is here expressed, and is able, to some extent, to make the Psalmist's language his own, and to say, with regard to Zion, however desolate and afflicted may be her condition, "If I forget thee," &c. With this application of the passage in view, we propose to notice,

I. The object of this attachment—Jerusalem.

II. The nature of it.

III. The grounds or reasons of it.

I. *The object.* Jerusalem was the city of the Jewish

solemnities. It was the place which God had chosen for his sanctuary, and as the residence of the symbols of his presence. There, in a special manner, he manifested himself to his people, and there he called upon them to meet with him in the instituted means of worship. There the people from all parts of the land were accustomed to assemble, to offer their sacrifices, to keep their solemn feasts, and to receive the divine commands. It was thus, particularly, that Jerusalem was distinguished above the other cities of Israel. It was the local habitation of Israel's God—the residence of his appointed means of worship, and the place of meeting with him. In the 122d Psalm, the Psalmist, eulogizing this holy city, describes it thus: "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together; whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord; for there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David." The distinguishing characteristic of Jerusalem, therefore, was its sacred privileges, its position as the local embodiment of all the means of intercourse between God and his people.

Now this, you will observe, was the object of the Jews' attachment, and of their earnest remembrance, during their captivity. It was not their private homes, their firesides, their lands, or their vineyards, on which they now so sorrowfully thought—but it was the city of their solemnities—their meeting place with God—the residence of all their sacred privileges. It was Jerusalem's memory they cherished with such affection and constancy. Doubtless they often thought of their homes and of the different scenes of pleasure which had blessed their earlier years; but when they thought upon Jerusalem, the loss of her precious privileges seemed to merge in it all other considerations.

But, as we have already intimated, the term "Jerusalem" may be regarded as synonymous with *the church*, in whatever age or land she may exist. There can be no doubt but the ancient city was a type or figure of the church of Christ. Its laws, its ordinances, and its ceremonies all clearly pointed to the arrangements of the Christian church. We have the name "Jerusalem" ex-

pressly applied to the New Testament dispensation, by the apostle Paul. Gal. iv. 26: "But Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all." Heb. xii. 22: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels," &c.

As the language of our text, therefore, is used by the Christian, under the present dispensation, it represents, as the object of his attachment, *the church*—the organized body of the friends and followers of Christ.

It is not our intention to enter into a discussion of the nature of the church. We shall simply endeavour to offer a brief definition of the term, and then pass on to notice the Christian's estimation of it.

The church is a divinely instituted association, composed of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion—in which the ordinances of Christ's appointment are observed, his truth maintained and defended, and by the instrumentality of which, sinners are converted, and saints edified and prepared for heaven. Of course, according to this definition, the true church is universal—limited to no particular sect or party, but comprehending all who acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the rule of faith and practice, and observe the ordinances of the gospel. And this is the object of the enlightened Christian's attachment. It is the church as such, and not any particular branch of it, to the exclusion of others. True it is natural, and it is right, that the Christian should feel a peculiar attachment for that branch with which he stands more immediately connected, and which, in his estimation, more faithfully maintains the truth of God than any other. Yet to confine his affection to the limited boundaries of his own communion, is evidently inconsistent with that public spirit which is so essential an attribute of Christian patriotism. As reasonably might the Jews in Babylon have fixed their thoughts on that particular spot in Jerusalem in which they had formerly resided, and remembered it to the exclusion of the rest of the city, as Christians be exclusively attached to the branch of Zion with which they are immediately connected. True attach-

ment to the church is universal, it extends to the cause of God, wherever maintained, and by whatever people.

This attachment also extends to every thing about the church—every thing peculiar to her as an organized institution. Her ordinances, her laws, her members, and her objects are each regarded by the Christian with affection. In respect to her *institutions*, his sentiment is like that of the Psalmist: “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth for the courts of the Lord.” “A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” In regard to the *laws* of God’s house also, the Psalmist expresses the sentiment of every true believer. “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold—sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.” “O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” In reference also to the *members* of the church, the language of the Psalmist is expressive of the sentiment of the Christian, when he styles them “the saints that are in the earth, the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” And finally, as to the church’s *objects*—the promotion of God’s glory, the maintenance of the truth, and the salvation of sinners, the whole tenor of revelation, as well as the testimony of all Christian experience, attest that these are objects necessarily dear to the Christian heart.

Thus the great object of the Christian’s attachment is the church, in all her peculiar and distinguishing features; in ordinances, laws, members, and objects.

II. The *nature* of this attachment. And all that we intend here is to notice some of the characteristics of a true and genuine love to the church, as they are presented in the case of these captive Jews.

1. The true Christian’s attachment to the church is *sincere* and *heartfelt*. It is well known that, in the political world, there is much patriotism expressed which is not felt. When it is popular, as it almost universally is, to profess much love and devotion to the country in which they live, demagogues often seize upon the favourite theme, and loudly proclaim their ardent patriotism; when,

in fact, as far as their attachment goes, their country is but another name for themselves. Their pretended patriotism is but a mask to conceal their heartless selfishness. And doubtless the same is often the case in reference to the church. Many are, no doubt, often induced, by interested and selfish considerations, to profess an attachment to the church and its interests, which they do not feel. It is scarcely necessary to remark, however, that such professions are utterly worthless. True Christian patriotism is essentially a sentiment of the heart, a deep and abiding impression of the soul.

Such was evidently the character of the patriotism of the captive exiles, whose language is here recorded for our instruction. Their tears, their abstinence from all their wonted pleasures, and their earnest appeal to God, to deprive them of their dearest personal possessions, in case their profession of attachment to Jerusalem should be false or insincere, clearly attest their sincerity. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," if my heart does not sincerely cherish the remembrance of thee and of thy interests, if I do not set thee above my chief joy, "then let my right hand forget her cunning, . . . let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." It is not possible that such language could have been uttered by such a people, and under such circumstances, unless the sentiment which it was designed to express was really the language of their hearts. In taking up this language, therefore, and making it our own, it becomes us to see that, as used by our lips, it expresses the sentiments of our hearts; or, in other words, that our attachment to the church and her interests is *heartfelt* and *sincere*.

2. It is of a *pleasing, joy-inspiring* character. The captive Jew refers to Jerusalem as his *joy*, his *chief joy*, *ay, above his chief joy*—"If I prefer not Jerusalem *above my chief joy*." The remembrance of Zion was, to those captive exiles, their great source of consolation in their present adversities. True, it was the remembrance of Zion which drew those tears of sorrow from their eyes, as they sat by the rivers of Babylon. But the cause of that grief was not any thing in their recollections of Zion itself; it was simply the association of those recollections

with the consciousness of their present desolation. Zion had ever been their joy; and the reflection that now they were banished far from its enjoyments, naturally produced sadness. Still they regarded it as the chief earthly source of their consolations, and looked forward to their return to it with earnest desire and hope.

And similar is the character of that attachment which every Christian bears to the church. It is a recognition of Zion as a place of delight, as a source of peculiar consolations. Like the psalmist, he is *glad*, when it is said unto him, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

3. This attachment is *peculiarly fervent*—"above my chief joy." Doubtless there were many other things included in their remembrances of their native land, on which these captive Jews would now reflect with sincere emotion. Their homes, their possessions, their personal and civil independence, and their other temporal privileges were no doubt dear to their memory. But above and beyond all these, they placed their estimation of Jerusalem. To the Holy City their hearts turned with a peculiar affection; and in the intensity of their feelings with regard to it, they could almost forget, or at least suppress all mention of the other objects of their patriotic attachment. The privileges of the sanctuary, the ordinances of divine worship, and the opportunities of fellowship with God, these were the objects upon which, above all others, their hearts were placed, and in which they found their chief delight.

And this example teaches us what should be the character of our attachment to the church. It should be supreme and devoted. Is the church indeed an institution of God? Is it one which, more than any other existing on earth, illustrates his character and perfections, and which is the great earthly medium of communion with him, the ordinance of God for the maintenance of the truth, the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of souls? And can we, possessing the spirit of Christians, regard it otherwise than with supreme and fervent interest and attachment? Can we look on it with indifference, or assign it a secondary place in our affections to any other institution or interest on earth? No! If we



appreciate the character of the church, and possess the spirit of Christians at all, we will prefer Jerusalem above our chief joy.

And yet, by how many who profess to be Christians, is the church, with all its privileges and interests, rated as a matter of but secondary concern! The world is preferred before it; its claims must yield to those of civil government, when they come in conflict, and even to those of a political party; and even personal interests, of carnal pleasure, or of self-aggrandizement, in too many minds, take the precedence of the church. But surely this is not the disposition of the Christian. His estimation necessarily places Jerusalem above temporal things. And therefore, in the regulation of his conduct, he devotes to the interests of the church, not the weak and sickly efforts he may be able to make, after employing the best of his time, of his talents, and of his possessions, for other purposes—but the highest and holiest and most active energies of his being.

4. It is a *permanent, abiding*, attachment—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," &c. This expression not only intimates a present remembrance, but a disposition and resolution to cherish that remembrance constantly. If I *ever* should forget, or lose my present fond attachment to Jerusalem, then let my right hand forget her cunning.

The sentiments which the captive Jews cherished and here expressed, in reference to their native land, were no light or transitory feelings. They were deeply seated and permanently established affections, affections which no change of scene or circumstances could diminish or destroy. For nearly seventy years they had been languishing in exile and bondage, far removed from the object of their affections, and still their hearts are animated with an undiminished, yea, rather increased attachment to Jerusalem.

And thus it is with the Christian's regard for the church. It is a permanent and established sentiment. It is founded on principle, and hence is not subject to those changes which attend the existence of mere passionate feeling. The individual, therefore, who is actuated by this sentiment, will still esteem and love the

church, no matter through what outward changes she may pass. He loves her in her desolation as well as in the day of her prosperity. It is recorded as characteristic of the servants of God, that they take pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favour even the dust thereof. And this attachment will still characterize the Christian, no matter through what changes *he* may pass. He may be persecuted, afflicted, and even exiled from the house of God, and still he will cherish this attachment unchanging and unchanged.

5. It is *practical*. True affection always seeks the good of its object. It prompts the individual who is animated by it to endeavour, by some practical effort, to promote its interests. Something of this characteristic we may discover in the example before us. These captive Jews were indeed unable to do any thing actively in behalf of Jerusalem, but their language plainly indicates their strong desire to do something. And in the absence of all other opportunities, they employ themselves in earnest prayer to God in her behalf, and against her enemies, thus manifesting that their attachment was of a *practical* character. And thus David elsewhere describes his affection to Jerusalem: "Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."

And such will be the resolution and endeavour of every one who loves the church of God in sincerity and truth. To suppose that an individual can really cherish an attachment to the cause of God, and yet sit down in idle inactivity, making no effort to promote its interests, involves an inconsistency which is too palpable to be for a moment entertained. No; true affection always excites to practical effort in behalf of its object. If, therefore, we possess any genuine attachment to the church, our lives and conduct will exhibit it, for they will be marked by earnest effort in her behalf. We will endeavour to promote her interests by our prayers, by our holy lives, by giving of our substance, by our talents, our influence, and by every appropriate effort which can be exerted in her behalf. If our attachment to the church possesses this practical character, it is genuine, and should be cherished, but if it be wholly theoretical or sentimental, it is vain and worthless.

III. We notice briefly the *grounds* or *reasons* of this attachment. Why is it that the Christian thus ardently and devotedly loves the church?

1. It is *the place of his birth*, of his *spiritual nativity*. There is an instinctive attachment, in every sensitive being, which binds his affections to the land that gave him birth. No matter where that land may be, or by what unfavourable circumstances surrounded, no matter how far the individual may have wandered from it, nor how long may have been the period of his absence, if memory be true to her office, he will ever cherish, for that country, a deeply seated and fervent attachment. This fact has been so universally observed, that the principle which it involves has justly come to be regarded as a natural or instinctive principle of the human mind. The place of one's birth is uniformly a cherished spot in the memories of the past.

And now this principle, we remark, will, to a great extent, account for the Christian's attachment to the church. The church is his birth-place, as a Christian; it is the land of his spiritual nativity. It is, ordinarily, in the presence of the church, and in connexion with its ordinances and means of grace, that the Holy Spirit produces that change on the human soul which is styled a "*being born again*;" and in consequence of which, the individual is denominated "*a new creature*." The psalmist, in the 87th psalm, in recounting the glorious things spoken of the city of God, particularly mentions this as one of them, that it is the birth-place of the children of God: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." And accordingly, the apostle, (Gal. iv. 26,) with evident allusion to this fact, styles the church "*the mother of us all*."

The church, therefore, being, in a most important sense, the birth-place of the Christian, has, evidently, peculiar claims on his affectionate remembrance. And if such be our character, if we have been born from above, the church, as the medium or instrumentality, through which that important change was effected, will ever be to us an object of interest and affection.

2. Another circumstance which draws the Christian's affection to the church, is the fact of *its divine origin*, the fact that *its builder and maker is GOD*. "THE LORD hath founded Zion," says the prophet, "and the poor of his people shall trust in it."

Every Christian is distinguished by a supreme and devoted affection to God. He is the summit of all their desires, hopes, and expectations. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Loving God thus supremely, they naturally love every thing that proceeds from Him, every thing bearing his image, or the impress of his character. "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him,"—that is, if we have a true attachment to the cause, we will also love its native effects. Now the church is begotten of God; he is her author and founder, and she bears the impress of his character. No wonder then that the Christian loves the church; strange would it be, indeed, could he possess that love to God which he professes, and yet feel no attachment to this institution, which is such an immediate emanation from him, and such a glorious exemplification of his character.

3. Another circumstance which renders the church an object of peculiar interest to the Christian is, *the price of her establishment, the sacrifice which she cost her founder*.

There is perhaps no single circumstance which, in the minds of American citizens, invests their country with such potent claims upon their regard, as the remembrance of *the price* at which her liberties were purchased. The recollections of that eventful struggle, to the successful termination of which we owe our origin as an independent nation, the remembrance of the blood shed by our devoted fathers, to procure for us our present civil privileges, have thrown around our country an interest which gives her peculiar claims upon our regard.

But great as was the price at which our national existence was secured, how insignificant does it appear, when compared with that which procured the church's establishment! The blood which was shed to obtain our

civil privileges was but that of frail, imperfect men, that by which the church was purchased, was the blood of God! "The church of God, which he hath purchased *with his own blood.*" "We were redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."

In the dignity, then, of the person of the Son of God, in the intensity of his sufferings, and in the completeness of his sacrifice, we may read the value of the church. And who that regards the character of Christ, and believes the story of his death, can look upon the church, the object for which this sacrifice was made, without a fervent feeling of interest and attachment?

4. Another circumstance which renders the church an object of such interest to the Christian is that *in her he enjoys the choicest privileges.* There he enjoys opportunities of fellowship with God which he could not otherwise possess. There he enjoys means of grace, sources of light and direction in duty, and of comfort and consolation in trouble. There he enjoys communion with kindred spirits, those saints on earth, the excellent, in whom is his delight. In short, in the ordinances and arrangements of the church, all his spiritual wants find provisions suited to their demands. Like the psalmist, he can say of Zion; "all my springs are in thee," all my springs or sources of comfort, of instruction, of sanctification, and of hope, all are in the church. There is the "river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High."

5. The *church's objects* furnish another ground of attachment. All the objects which the church, as an organized association, has in view, are dear to every individual Christian, and are alike the objects of his individual desires and efforts. We have already referred to those objects as consisting, in general, in the promotion of the glory of God, the maintenance of the truth, and the salvation of souls. These are the great and prevailing objects of every Christian's life. If he is sincerely attached to these, therefore, evidently he must feel a peculiar interest in that divinely organized association whose special business as well as effort it is to accomplish them.

6. The church is, to the Christian, *an earnest and foretaste of heaven*. All that is peculiar in the spiritual enjoyments of the heavenly world, has its type and foretaste in the privileges of the visible church; and the happiness of heaven will be but the consummation of the enjoyments of the church below. Heaven will just be one vast sanctuary, and eternity, to its inhabitants, an everlasting Sabbath. The exercises of that upper sanctuary will be the same with those which distinguish the church here, the exercises of worship. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." And in these constant and unceasing acts of worship, will the happiness of that heavenly world consist.

Evidently, then, the Christian has a foretaste of that happiness in his connexion with the church below. Every time he engages in the worship of God in the sanctuary, on every return of those delightful seasons of communion with God, which the arrangements of the church provide, he has an earnest of heaven, an anticipated enjoyment of its blessed privileges. And this circumstance will necessarily, in his consideration, impart to the church a peculiar interest.

Delighting in the prospects of heaven, looking forward to it with earnest desire and expectation, surely he cannot fail to regard, with special attachment, that institution which furnishes such a satisfying foretaste of heaven's anticipated enjoyments, and whose arrangements are so well adapted to prepare him for entering upon them.

Can *we*, brethren, make the language of the text our own? Is the church of God, to us, any thing more than any other institution?

Let us seek her prosperity.

## SERMON IX.

## THE ALL-IMPORTANT CHOICE.

Joshua xxiv. 15: "*Choose you this day whom ye will serve.*"

THERE is no fact, connected with the nature of man, more uniformly and undeniably certain than this—that *every rational being must have a god*. To every intelligent agent, there must and will be some object of supreme desire and earnest pursuit. It is one of the primary laws of our nature, from the influence of which no one is exempt. Man may indeed disown the authority of the God that made him, and become so thoroughly hardened in unbelief as, with the fool, to say in his heart, "There is no God." Yet he cannot divest himself of his natural disposition to worship and to serve some object, either fanciful or real. Unconsciously, it may be, to himself, he will exalt some earthly object to that place in his heart which belongs to God, and to it will consecrate, not only the most fervent affections of his soul, but also the most devoted services of his life.

For proof of this fact, we need only refer you to the history of the world, and to your own observation. Look abroad into the world, and contemplate especially those portions of it where the true God is unknown; and what do you behold? Uniformly, gods many, and lords many, formed of wood or stone, and in the vain imagination of the blinded heathen, clothed with the attributes of divinity. Look again to those individual instances, (which occur even in Christian lands,) of men who have renounced the service of the living God, and disowned his authority. Is it not equally true of them that they have but transferred their worship from the proper object to an inferior? Have they not all their idols—their peculiar lusts and passions and desires, to the gratification of which all their energies are devoted? The objects upon which these lusts and desires are fixed, are just as really *gods* to them as the deified stocks and stones are to the benighted heathen.

Since, then, it is one of the necessities of our nature that every individual must have a *god*—some supreme object of affection and trust and devotion—it becomes a question of importance to each individual—*who* or *what* shall be *my god*? It is no longer a question with any one,—Shall I have a god? This has been settled by the very constitution of his nature, and is beyond the possibility of being reversed. It is one of the necessities of his being that he have some object of supreme affection and devotion. And since the happiness of every individual is ultimately dependent on the object which he has chosen as his chief good, the choice of this object must necessarily be peculiarly important. No one can look beyond the supreme object of his desires and affections, for happiness. If that object, therefore, should fail him—if it should prove a disappointment, he must be miserable.

Now the selection of this object is left, by God, to each individual for himself. No one is compelled to choose any object contrary to his own inclinations. This question is submitted to the decision of our own minds, and must be decided by us individually. We are not, indeed, to suppose that we are at liberty to act, in this choice, independently of moral obligations, or that there is no moral obligation resting on us, antecedently to our own choice, to serve, *the Lord*. The duty of serving God is incumbent upon us whether we acknowledge it or not. But God deals with man as a rational being, and so demands from him a voluntary service. He seeks not an homage which is extorted merely by compulsion, but that which flows from the voluntary choice of the soul. He addresses man as a rational and intelligent agent, and while demanding of him the homage of his heart and life, sets before him such reasons and arguments as are calculated, in the mind of a reasonable being, to render his demand obviously just and right, and thus to secure the voluntary and cordial acquiescence of the sinner therein.

Such is the manner in which the Israelites were addressed, and in which we also are addressed, by the servant of the Lord, in our text. Joshua was well aware—



both from his knowledge of human nature, and from his lengthened acquaintance with the character of the children of Israel, in particular—that they must and would have *some god*; and he was deeply anxious, both on account of his regard for the honour of God, and his desire for the welfare of that people, that THE LORD should be their God. Accordingly, he sets before them, in a comprehensive, but distinct view, the claims of this God upon them. He reviews his various dealings with them in times past; the many deliverances he had wrought in their behalf; and the numerous favours he had bestowed upon them. And now he calls upon them, by all their obligations of gratitude for mercies past, and by all their hopes of future good, to continue steadfast in their allegiance, and serve THE LORD.

Still, much as he desired this result, he would use no compulsion to bring it about. He would not even have them influenced by his advice alone, in this important matter. The service which this God requires, and which alone can be acceptable, is that which is voluntary and cordial; and, therefore, after presenting the various arguments which enforce the duty of serving the Lord, he submits the matter to the decision of their own minds, and calls upon them, as reasonable beings, to choose whom they would serve. He reminds them that there are other objects set up as gods, and worshipped by the nations around them, and that to the service of these they would be tempted. He calls upon them to consider the claims of these seriously now, and, by a comparison of them with the claims of God, to decide now which they would serve. And he especially presses a *present* decision, “Choose ye, *this day*.” It is a matter of present importance, and the present was the most favourable opportunity they would ever have, for making a correct decision. “Therefore choose you, *this day*, whom ye will serve.”

As we have already hinted, this exhortation applies, in all its force, to us. It is just as important for us, as it ever was for the Israelites, that we serve THE LORD. And it is equally as important that that service be voluntary and cordial. And moreover, there are just as

many idols and false gods, to draw away our affections from the true God, as ever there were in the days of Joshua. Gross idols of wood and stone, they may not be, but they are just as really substitutes for the living God.

Permit me, then, briefly to call your attention to this exhortation, and in the way of illustrating and applying it, to notice

I. SOME OF THE DIFFERENT OBJECTS WHICH CLAIM OUR SERVICE, AND THE NATURE OF THEIR CLAIMS RESPECTIVELY.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING A PRESENT DECISION. "*this day.*"

I. THE DIFFERENT OBJECTS, ETC.

We have already said that the choice of these objects rests with each individual for himself. We know indeed, and it is an important truth, ever to be borne in mind, that we are incapable of making a correct decision, of ourselves. Were the matter left to our own unaided choice, no matter what arguments might be presented, enforcing the choice of the service of God, it would be refused, for "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and if left to itself, *will not* come to Christ, even though by coming it might obtain life. Our Lord says: "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him."

But although the moral ability to make a correct decision is derived only from God working in us, yet God ordinarily produces this ability through the instrumentality of effort on our part. "Work out your own salvation," says the apostle, "with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." Observe here, that it is God who worketh in us *to will*, or to *choose any object*; yet he works in connexion with the operations of our minds. He presents arguments and reasons to influence the mind; and then, while we are weighing and reflecting upon these, and looking to Him for his assisting grace, He imparts the ability to choose aright.

It is evidently our incumbent duty to consider seriously the arguments or moral considerations which God presents in his word, to aid us in our decision in reference

to his service. It is only while thus engaged we can anticipate that assistance which will enable us to make a correct decision.

We propose, therefore, now to present to you briefly some of the different objects which claim your supreme affection and devotion, and to notice their respective claims upon you, in order that you may determine which it is your duty and your interest to serve. And here we may observe that **THE WORLD**, in its various sinful and carnal objects of desire and pursuit, is the chief **IDOL** which comes in competition with God, in its claims upon the service of sinners. As, however, the world embraces a variety of objects which are each worshipped by different classes of sinners, instead of the **TRUE GOD**, it is necessary to descend to particulars. And we notice

1. *The riches of the world.*

There is perhaps no idol which the world presents, more universally or more servilely worshipped than this. The vast majority of men bow down before it with an abject homage which only finds a parallel in the idolatry of the most degraded heathen. The attainment of wealth—the accumulation of earthly substance—seems to be the grand end of all their desires and pursuits. Not satisfied with a competence—with the ordinary returns of Providence to honest industry—they are constantly racking their brains for new inventions, and straining every nerve to carry them into effect, to increase their possessions. In the attainment of abundance, all their desires are concentrated, and they vainly imagine that in that attainment their chief happiness is to be found. And to this object, accordingly, their most earnest and unwearied efforts are directed. It absorbs their thoughts, overrules, or expels from the soul, all other objects, and sways an unrivalled sceptre over the man. Every other feeling and sentiment is governed by this all-absorbing love of money. Such is the case with every individual who has made riches his chief good, and has fixed his affections upon them. The fact needs no proof. It is confirmed by the most superficial observation.

And now, is not this object, thus pursued, properly denominated **AN IDOL**? And is not such pursuit of it

*idolatry*? Does it not in reality occupy the place of GOD, when it is thus made the supreme object of desire, affection, and pursuit? It does, and hence is properly called an *idol* or *false god*.

Accordingly we find it thus represented in the scriptures. The man who thus earnestly and anxiously pursues the things of the world is expressly styled an *idolater*, and his devotion, or covetousness, *idolatry*. Our Saviour himself represents the riches of this world as the *rivals of God*, and expressly assures us that we cannot serve GOD and MAMMON. And does not this pursuit of earthly riches bear on its very face the essential characteristics of idolatry? What is it but giving to the *creature* that homage which is due to the CREATOR? With the covetous man, riches are the supreme object of his affections, his desires, and his devotion. And what more could be rendered to God? The language of piety is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, O LORD, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." But that of the covetous is, "I have made GOLD my *hope*, and have said to the FINE GOLD, Thou art my *confidence*. I rejoice because MY WEALTH is great, and because my hands have *gotten much*."

It is clearly evident, then, that the *riches of this world* do constitute an IDOL—an object of desire and pursuit, the service of which is inconsistent with the service of GOD.

And now what are the *claims* of this idol upon our services? Does it possess any such claims as will justify us in renouncing the service of God for its sake? There are two things, in general, to be taken into consideration, in determining the objects of our devotion—their *intrinsic character*, and their *influence upon our happiness*.

Unless an object have something in it intrinsically excellent, we naturally regard it as senseless and degrading to make it an object of supreme attachment.

Is there any thing in wealth—in money or possessions—viewed simply in themselves, deserving our esteem or affection? Apart from the uses to which they may be applied, what are they? Dull, senseless, inanimate mat-

ter. The glittering gold which so attracts the hearts of men is in itself as worthless as the most ignoble dust we tread under our feet. All the value attached to it in the mind is fictitious, is assumed; it has no real existence.

Will you then permit such an object to engross your affections and devotion, in preference to the living God? You wonder at the blindness and the folly of the wretched heathen, who bow down in formal worship to *images* of gold; and can you make that same material, in another form, the object of your chief desire and affection? If so, how are you better than they? There can be no essential difference between gold and silver shaped into statuary, adorned with stately trappings, and worshipped by the heathen, and the same metals shaped in the form of eagles, crowns, and dollars, and worshipped by inhabitants of enlightened lands. The forms of the idol, and the modes of adoration are different, but the *idolatry* is the same.

If, then, the gold and silver idols of the heathen are no gods, and have no claims on the worship of their devotees, can you for a moment believe that those same materials, as you have them, have any claims upon your homage?

Since there is nothing, then, in earthly possessions, in themselves, to render them worthy of our supreme regard, let us turn to the other consideration, and inquire—*are they essentially connected with our happiness?* Are they capable of imparting to us any real or satisfying enjoyment?

Contemplate them, but for a moment, in this light, and see if they are worthy of your supreme affection or confidence. Suppose your wealth equal to your utmost desires, think you that you would be perfectly happy? We know wealth can purchase many comforts; but ask yourselves, would you be happy had you no other enjoyments than wealth can procure? Can it impart ease to the mind? Can it banish all doubts and fears and anxieties? Can it even secure you from bodily ills, or from liability to physical sufferings? More than all this, can it secure any spiritual and eternal enjoyments? To ask

these questions is to *answer* them. Every one knows that wealth, however boundless it may be in its extent, cannot secure to its possessor any of these essential elements of happiness.

Will you then make it your chief good? With its inadequacy to promote your happiness thus glaringly before your eyes, will you make it the chief object of your desire and pursuit? Surely if you regard your own interests, you will look for something higher and better. And remember, on the other hand, that this idol is not only incapable of securing your happiness, but it will, if supremely worshipped, be productive of incalculable evil. It will not only stand in the way of all true rational enjoyment here, but *it shuts the gate of heaven* against its deluded votary, and secures *eternal wo*. "It is easier," says our Lord, "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a *rich man* to enter into the kingdom of God." "They that *will be rich* fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which *drown men in destruction and perdition*."

With these solemn declarations before your eyes, can you still regard *riches* as the *chief good*? "WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN, THOUGH HE SHOULD GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?"

## 2. *Earthly Pleasures.*

There is a natural desire, in every human heart, *to be happy*. God has created us with capacities for enjoyment, and these capacities are constantly craving their appropriate gratifications. Accordingly, the universal inquiry among mankind is, "*Who will show us any good?*" And to obtain a satisfactory answer to this inquiry is the constant and untiring effort of all. And although this desire is, in itself, innocent and right, yet, in consequence of man's depravity, it has become the occasion of many and various forms of gross idolatry. For, having forsaken, as all have, the Fountain of living waters—the only source of true enjoyment—it prompts the sinner to hew out to himself broken cisterns which can hold no water.

The world presents numerous deceptive sources of pleasure, to which it invites the sinner to come and satis-

fy his desire. And multitudes, following their own blinded passions and desires, listen to the syren song, and are induced to make these earthly vanities their chief good.

These earthly sources of pleasure are too numerous to be distinctly specified. They embrace every variety of carnal pleasures—from the lowest grade of beastly, sensual gratifications, to the most refined species of intellectual enjoyment. They comprehend the libertine's indulgence and gratification of base sensual passions—the drunkard's intoxicating cup—the reveller's vain amusements and carousals—the scoffer's jest—and the philosopher's pleasures of science. In short, every variety of enjoyment, suited to the peculiar tastes and habits of the inquirer, is offered by the world to those who are longing for happiness.

And now, for the sake of these, the sinner is asked to give up the service of God. For the sake of the enjoyment which these sources of pleasure may afford him, he is asked to give up his efforts to obtain the favour of God. This, then, is one of the IDOLS, between which and GOD you are called to choose. And can you hesitate as to your choice? What claims has this idol on your supreme attachment or devotion? Is there any thing intrinsically excellent in the pleasures of the world? Are they not uniformly low, debasing, and sensual? Take the best of them, and place them in comparison with those pure and holy enjoyments which flow from the service of God, and how apparent, how vast is the difference! Surely, no one can contemplate these earthly pleasures, in themselves, and feel that they are worthy of supreme attachment. Every one feels, if he possesses a spark of moral sensibility, that they are low, degrading, and dishonouring to their devotees. Surely, if you possess any self-respect, you cannot make these your god!

View them also in reference to your interests and happiness. Are they capable of truly and permanently satisfying the soul? We need only refer to the experience of those who have tried them. How uniform is the testimony of all such to their utter insufficiency! "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is the judgment finally passed

upon them, even by their most favoured followers. In the midst of all his enjoyments, the sinner still feels that he is not perfectly happy; and hence that continual restlessness—that incessant hurrying from one enjoyment to another, which uniformly characterizes the sons of pleasure. “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” “There is no PEACE,” saith my God, “to the wicked.”

And still another discouraging fact, in reference to these earthly pleasures, is that, whatever temporary enjoyment they may afford, they are necessarily *short-lived*. They are like the crackling of thorns under a pot—they may blaze up brightly and cheerily for awhile, but they soon vanish, leaving the depths of darkness behind them. “Behold! all ye that kindle a fire, and compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. THIS SHALL YE HAVE OF MY HAND, YE SHALL LIE DOWN IN SORROW.”

Can you choose that, for your supreme portion, which terminates *thus*? especially when a better and an enduring portion is freely offered? “Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

### 3. *Worldly honours.*

Next to the love of riches and of pleasures, there is perhaps no principle more universally prevalent than *ambition*, or a desire of distinction. Actuated by a spirit of pride, which, in some form, dwells in every heart, men naturally desire that their fancied excellencies should be known and honoured. They cannot endure the thought that all their virtues and attainments should waste themselves unseen, and that they should live and die unknown. They long to be placed on some proud eminence, where they can look down, in conscious superiority, on the common herd, and receive the tribute of honour and applause from their lips and hearts. And the world, ever ready to gratify the depraved desire of the sinner, whatever it may be, provides many schemes for accomplishing this. It points to many posts of honour and renown,



which may be gained only by the sacrifice of other objects, and urges him to make the sacrifice. And the sinner, impelled by his insatiable thirst for fame, accepts the offer, and bows down before the glittering IDOL. He sees the longed-for honours in the distance; the desire to obtain them takes possession of his soul; and to their attainment, henceforth, his chief efforts are constantly directed. Forgetful of the praise of God, he fixes all his expectations of happiness in the applause of men.

We need not stay to prove that this is *idolatry*—that the object thus pursued is AN IDOL. It is an object of supreme desire and devotion; it absorbs all the chief affections of the soul, and stands in direct opposition to the service of God. “How can ye believe,” says our Lord, “who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”

Nor let it be supposed that this is an idol worshipped only by the *great ones* of the earth. It has its devotees among all classes, and in all conditions of life. It tempts alike the politician, the statesman, the scholar, the divine, and the artisan—the tradesman and the farmer. None are so high as to be above the reach of its influence—none too low to be capable of being affected by it. The breath of flattery and popular applause is a grateful incense to all, to obtain which many are ready to renounce and sacrifice all higher objects. How often do you see even honest, upright men—how often do you feel yourselves inclined to—swerve from the path of duty, to escape the censures of the world, or ready to pursue a sinful course to purchase its applause?

It is then a RIVAL OF GOD. Give yourselves up to it, and it will lead you far away from the service of the LIVING and the TRUE GOD.

And now, what are the claims of this IDOL upon us? Is there any thing about it so essentially worthy, or so connected with our happiness, as to justify us in renouncing, for its sake, the service and the favour of God? What is it? A mere name! a thing which has no real, but a merely fictitious and fanciful existence! Honour derives all its real value from the character of the source from which it comes. To be praised by a fool, who is

incapable of appreciating character, and who bestows his praises merely by caprice or prejudice, will be regarded by none as a desirable distinction. And what better than this is the applause of *the world*, in general? Who regards the mass of mankind as proper judges of character? Look at the manner in which their applause is generally bestowed. Who are its objects? The *wise*, the *good*, and the *worthy*? Almost uniformly the reverse. The man whose hands are dipped in human gore—the brilliant actor who plays on the stage of vanity and vice—the bold and shameless demagogue—the profane and senseless scoffer—and the low and grovelling clown, who panders to their vitiated passions—these are, for the most part, the objects on whom the honours of the world are showered.

And now, could you desire honours from such a source? Can you make that your chief good which will class you with such characters, and distinguish you by such associations.

Look again at the *fickleness* of this god. How easily is the breath of popular applause converted into the blast of infamy and scorn! How often do we see the individual exalted to-day to the pinnacle of fame, to-morrow prostrated in the depths of disgrace! How often is the voice of the multitude heard shouting HOSANNAS to a favoured object to-day, and to-morrow breathing forth anathemas and execrations, and shouting, “CRUCIFY HIM—CRUCIFY HIM!”

Can you place your reliance and hopes of happiness on that object which is thus fickle and false, and which, however it may favour you to-day, may ere long abandon you to utter desolation?

And after all, suppose all your ambitious schemes completely successful; suppose the favours of this fickle god should to you be constant and faithful, will you be perfectly happy? Can the honours of the world satisfy your soul? Can they exempt you from sufferings, or give you comfort therein? Can they hinder the approach of death, or relieve you from its terrors when it comes? Can they open to you the gates of heaven, or secure you happiness hereafter? O! you know they cannot! You know you may possess all the honours of the world, and yet be

miserable here and hereafter. Can you then be satisfied with them as your portion? Is it not your interest to turn away from this god, and seek some other?

And now let me direct your attention briefly to

4. *The TRUE object of worship*—THE LIVING GOD.

Having seen that none of the objects presented by the world are worthy of our homage; and bearing in mind the necessity of our nature, that we must have a god, we naturally ask, where shall we find this being? And we answer, on the strength of both reason and revelation, "*in the heavens.*" That glorious Being who dwells in light, inaccessible and full of glory—who created us and all the world around us—who provides all our comforts and enjoyments, and in whose hands are our lives and our eternal destinies; *this* is our God. He has freely offered himself to us as our God, guarantying to us, on our acceptance, all the favours Deity can bestow, and requiring us, on the other hand, to love and cherish him as our chief good.

And now has not this Being claims on our supreme and exclusive service? Look for a moment at his essential character—at what he has done for us, and the prospect of our future happiness centred in him. We have said, and the common sense of mankind confirms it, that whatever is supremely excellent or worthy in itself, demands our supreme devotion, even although there were no other consideration to confirm it. And is not God supremely excellent? Are there not in him all the traits of character which the higher sentiments of our nature approve and love? Is he not infinitely wise, powerful, good, and holy? Look abroad, over the works of his hands, and read his character there! Look up unto the heavens which his own fingers framed, and to the moon, and to the stars, which were ordained by him! Look at the variety—the order—the adaptation—and the perfection of his works. And contemplate the dispensations of his providence, by which these things are directed and governed to their appropriate ends. See you not wisdom, power, goodness and truth, displayed in all these? Are you not ready to say, with the Psalmist, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth?"

Turn to the WORD OF GOD, and contemplate the wisdom, holiness, truth, and goodness, which there stand out so prominently, and say, is not the Being from whom this book emanated worthy of the supreme homage of our hearts? If infinite purity, wisdom, and love, are attributes of character which demand supreme homage and regard, no one can doubt the claims of the LIVING GOD to such homage. For in him these attributes are united.

But consider also what this Being has done *for us*, and see if he has not claims on our *gratitude*. This argument, you will observe, Joshua uses in enforcing the service of the Lord upon the children of Israel. He recounts the various deliverances he had wrought in their behalf, and the various blessings he had bestowed upon them; and he adds, "Now, *therefore*, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth." And the people felt and acknowledged the force of the argument; for they answered to the appeal of Joshua, "The Lord our God, he it is that brought us up, and our fathers out of the land of Egypt—therefore will we also serve the Lord." Every individual of moral sensibility acknowledges the claims of gratitude. We naturally feel ourselves under obligations to regard and serve our benefactor. Thus the children of Israel felt in reference to God. And are not the same obligations on us? Look back upon all the way you have been conducted hitherto—upon the favours you have enjoyed, and mercies received, and reflect that all these came from God. Reflect that you are indebted to him for your very *being*, and for all its attendant blessings. Think of the great *salvation* which he has provided for you, from sin and from wrath eternal—a salvation which cost no less a price than *the blood of his beloved Son!* Think of the comprehensive and incalculable benefits comprised in this salvation. And in view of all these things, can you feel that he has no claim on your *gratitude*? Do you not feel that you owe to him the highest services you can possibly render?

Once more—contemplate this Being as he stands connected with your *future prospects*. Recall to your mind the fact that you are entirely and absolutely dependent upon him for all you hope to enjoy. Remember that to

him belongs the ordering and arranging of all your future circumstances in this world, and that in his hands is your *eternal destiny*. And in view of these facts, which none but an atheist can deny, do you not feel it your interest to enjoy the favour and the friendship of this GOD? But remember that you cannot do so otherwise than by engaging constantly and devotedly in his service. "If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you." "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." "Consider this and be afraid, ye that forget the Lord."

Now, in view of all these facts, are you not ready to say: "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?*" "Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us, but henceforth *by thee only* will we make mention of thy name?"

II. We are to consider THE IMPORTANCE OF A PRESENT DECISION—"Choose ye *this day* whom ye will serve."

There is a natural disposition among mankind to put off to a future period all consideration of matters connected with religion. Even although convinced of the necessity of making a decision in regard to them at some future period, they always wish to evade it for the present. This procrastinating spirit—this deferring attention to divine things to more convenient seasons—has been, and still is, the source of irremediable misery to vast multitudes of our race. Hence it is that the scriptures so urgently insist on a *present* decision. "Choose ye THIS DAY whom ye will serve." "Now is the accepted time," &c. And there are two or three considerations which will show the propriety of these exhortations.

1. *The importance of the matter to be decided.* Common prudence would dictate that the most important matters should always have our immediate and most careful consideration—that they should have the preference to those of inferior importance. It is upon this principle that wise men act in the ordinary affairs of life; and it is by attending to it that they prosper. Now what matter can be more important than the choice of A GOD? Upon

the decision of this question depend, not only our present, but our eternal happiness and interest. A mistake here will operate not only against our peace and happiness in this world, but its influence will tell upon the interests of our souls throughout eternal ages. The decision of this question, then, is evidently of the utmost importance. In comparison with it, all questions touching our temporal affairs sink into utter and absolute insignificance. Does not this question then demand our *immediate* attention? Can we, as reasonable beings, neglect the decision of it, to attend to any other matter of inferior importance?

2. *The present is the most favourable opportunity for deciding correctly.* Even supposing that we may live to see the more "convenient season," to which we are disposed to defer the decision of this question, have we any reason to believe that we will be in any better condition for deciding it? On the contrary, every probability is that our condition will be more unfavourable. Every one knows that the longer any question remains upon the mind undecided, the more difficult it is to arrive at any decision. The mind becomes permanently unsettled, and involved in doubt and confusion. And, moreover, as the cares, anxieties, and troubles of life are constantly increasing as one advances in years, it is evident that these will contribute to disqualify the mind for any correct determination. The more free the mind is from the burden of other cares, the better is its condition for attending to these solemn things. But never will the mind of any be more at liberty than *now*. And there is still another consideration. Now, you have the assistance of *the Spirit* offered. *You may never have it again!* When you are called, as you are now, to decide this point, the Spirit is standing ready to aid you in determining it. But remember, God's Spirit will not *always* strive with man. Rejected now, he may abandon you for ever to the hardness of your hearts. You may live, but you will live without the strivings of the Spirit. When you have once deliberately rejected the offers of mercy—when you have trifled with the influences of the Spirit, you have no right or reason to expect that that Spirit will ever strive with

you again. You may long, and sigh, and cry; but like Esau, you will then find no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears. HE IS JOINED TO IDOLS, LET HIM ALONE.

3. *This may be your only opportunity.* The uncertainty of life is so evident, and so universally acknowledged, that it has almost ceased to attract attention. It is a fact written in almost every chapter of the Bible, and inscribed on every page of providence. Go to yonder grave-yard, and read the inscriptions on those mournful monuments of the departed; and what striking proof meets you there of the uncertainty of life! All ages, ranks, and conditions are there. Refer to your own observation, and go no farther back than the late solemn providences which have passed over this community. How many have you seen in the morning of life, in the vigour of manhood, as well as in the ripeness of age, cut down by the destroyer! Remember, a little while ago, these were what *you* are now. Can you resist the impression that you may soon, very soon, be what they are now? O! we know not what a day may bring forth! To-morrow may, to many of us, be in *the eternal world!* At best our time is short, and the hour of our departure uncertain. At such a time as ye think not will the Son of Man come. Can we then risk a delay in deciding a question which so intimately concerns our eternal interests? A day may place it beyond our decision; "for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave." BE WISE TO-DAY, 'TIS MADNESS TO DEFER.

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## SERMON X.

### EARLY PIETY.

ECCLES. xii. 1: "*Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*"

ONE of the most interesting features of the Christian religion is the universality of its invitations and commands.

It is a system which embraces, in the wide extent of its benevolent objects, the interests of the whole human race, unlimited by any real or imaginary distinction. In the announcements or proclamations which it makes to men, whether in the way of promise or injunction, its voice extends alike to all. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man," is the tenor of its offers and commands. And from this universal address no member of the human family can plead exemption. It includes alike the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the young and the old, the righteous and the wicked; and, in short, *all*, by whatever real or conventional distinctions of circumstances or of character they may be known among men. All are entitled to receive and embrace the gospel offer; and all are alike subject to the authority of God's commands.

This fact is attested, not merely by the universal terms in which its general calls are made, but also by its special addresses to each and every particular class and character comprehended in the human family. While the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, and the various other distinctive classes of mankind, are all included in the general offers and calls of the gospel, they are, at the same time, addressed individually, and the privileges and duties, set forth in the general address, are enforced upon them personally, by arguments drawn from their particular circumstances, character or condition.

Thus the religion of the Bible would extend its benefits to *all*; it would have sinners of every age, class, and character, participate in its peculiar privileges.

To no particular class of the human family, however, are the offers and calls of the gospel more frequently, or with more earnestness, addressed than to the one referred to in our text—**THE YOUNG**. As it is ordinarily the case that the character of man depends chiefly on the instructions given and the habits established in the morning of life, it was evidently a matter of peculiar importance that in endeavouring to mould the human heart into a conformity with the divine law, the inspired writers should direct their special attention to the youthful mind. Im-



pressions of divine things are more easily made in early life than at any subsequent period, when the cares and riches and pleasures of the world have hardened the heart and warped its sensibilities; and when such impressions have been made at this early period, they are ordinarily, from the very nature of the mind, more permanent, and more influential on the life and conduct, than those produced at any subsequent time. Hence the propriety and importance of insisting upon an early attention to the claims of religion. Youth is the spring—the seed-time of life; and if the seeds of piety be not implanted and cultivated in this, their appropriate season, the garden of the heart will ordinarily remain through life a barren waste, grown over with the thorns and briars of sin and folly.

Clearly discerning this truth, the penman of our text—an individual who was distinguished by the honourable title of “the wisest of men”—directs his special attention to the instruction of the young. His superior wisdom, extensive observation, and personal experience, had deeply convinced him of the importance of that period of life. He had doubtless seen innumerable instances in which the neglect of early piety had been followed by a life of obstinate and persevering folly, and at length a death of hopelessness and horror. He had seen too that a child trained, in early years, in the way of piety, ordinarily grew up to manhood distinguished for its uprightness and goodness, and when old, departed not therefrom. And impressed by these facts, with a sense of the necessity of endeavouring to enlist the mind, at its earliest period, in the service of God, this inspired writer frequently addresses himself directly to the young, communicating instruction and advice suitable to their capacity and wants. This will be observed particularly in regard to the Book of Proverbs, the great design of which—he himself tells us—was “to give the young man knowledge and discretion.” And in the Book of Ecclesiastes, he still keeps the same great object in view. Although professedly engaged in the investigation of subjects mysterious in their nature, incomprehensible in their extent, and immeasurable in their importance, he frequently turns aside to resume the direct instruction of the young,

and to illustrate truths suited to their capacity and their wants. The chapter of which our text is a part, may be regarded as the practical application of the discourse carried on in the preceding part of the Book.

After illustrating, at length, the vanity of earthly things, and the number and variety of evils which exist under the sun, and which all must, to some extent, encounter, the wise man improves and applies his subject by deducing from it an argument in favour of early piety. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the *evil days* come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, *I have no pleasure in them.*" Since the life upon which you are entering is one of vanity—brief, fading, and unsatisfying—identified with almost innumerable ills and sorrows, and terminated, at length, by a solemn change—how important is it that, in the beginning of your existence, you should seek and obtain an interest in his favour who alone can protect from life's ills, or impart consolation under them.

In further discussion, we propose,

I. *To explain the duty here enjoined.*

II. *To suggest some arguments and inducements enforcing it.*

I. *The duty enjoined*—"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

It is scarcely necessary to remark here that the object commended to our remembrance by this language is God. He is the Creator of all things that exist, and is, in a special sense, *our* Creator, being both the framer of our bodies and the Father of our spirits. Accordingly, this is one of the titles he assumes to himself, and by which he is frequently distinguished in the scriptures. The use of this title, therefore, in the present instance, is not to be understood as limiting our remembrance of him simply to his character as the Creator, but as a general designation which would be universally understood and recognised. At the same time this title contains—as we may afterwards notice—an implied argument, enforcing the remembrance of him here enjoined. It has been observed by some that the term *Creator* is, in the original, in the plural form, literally signifying *Creators*; and it has been thought by such, that the term was de-

signed to intimate the existence of a Trinity, or at least a plurality of persons in the Godhead, and to teach that each of these persons is to be included in our devotional remembrance. However this may be, as far as the original meaning of the term here used is concerned, the idea is doubtless a correct one, that God, in all his persons, attributes and characters, is the proper object of our religious worship. In whatever character he may reveal himself to us by his word or by his works, and whatever attributes he may manifest himself as possessing in that character, and as possessed of those attributes, we are required to remember him.

But what is intended by remembering God? What particular duties does this injunction include? *To remember*, in its primary sense, is to keep in mind and reflect upon some past event or absent object. It is, in short, the acting of the mind in reference to something either past or distant. The nature of this remembrance will, of course, vary in different instances, according to the character of the subject or object about which it is exercised. Objects of a pleasing, gratifying character, will of course call for a remembrance cordial and joyful, and those of the opposite kind, the contrary. To remember our Creator, therefore, in the sense of our text, is, in general, to cherish such thoughts and feelings in reference to him as are correspondent to his character and claims upon us; in other words, it is to remember him with faith, love, reverence, and devotion. To define the duty, however, more particularly, we remark,

1. *That it requires us to make God a frequent object of our thoughts.* This, we have seen, is a primary idea in remembrance. He who never thinks about an absent friend cannot surely, with any propriety, be said to remember him. Memory, if exercised about an object at all, will necessarily bring it frequently before the contemplation of the mind, and make it the subject of frequent thought and reflection. To remember God evidently includes this as its primary idea, that God should be the object of frequent thoughts and meditations. We know how it is in regard to other objects of our affectionate remembrance. If a cherished friend be absent

from us, and we have no opportunity of immediate personal communion with him, our hearts will naturally manifest their attachment to him by frequently recalling, and dwelling on his memory. And thus it is with God. That individual who never, or only on rare occasions, thinks of his Creator, evidently cannot be said to remember him at all. This exercise is represented in the scriptures as the great distinguishing difference between the righteous and the wicked. Of the wicked it is said, "God is not in all his thoughts," that is, he is not in any of them. The sinner dislikes the thoughts of God, and endeavours, as far as possible, to banish them from his mind. He likes not to retain God in his knowledge. But the character of the righteous, in this respect, is of a directly contrary nature. To him the thoughts of God are pleasing and delightful, and he cherishes them with untiring frequency. "I have set the Lord always before me," is the language of his heart. His mind frequently turns from the vanities of the world to the contemplation of those (to him) more interesting subjects which are connected with the existence and character of his glorious Creator.

2. *The duty enjoined also requires that our thoughts concerning him be true and just.* To ascribe to God, when we think of him, attributes which are not his, and to forget or overlook his real character, is not remembering him, but a being of our imagination. It may be an idol, a Baal, Jupiter, or Moloch, or a being altogether such as ourselves, but certainly it is not Jehovah. God is just what he has represented himself to be, in his word and works. Divest him of any of his attributes, or ascribe to him any he does not possess, and you have another being, essentially different from him; and if that be the object of your remembrance, you are remembering, not your Creator, but a false god which your imagination has substituted for him. To fulfil the injunction of our text, therefore, evidently requires us to know something of his character, and previously to make ourselves acquainted with the peculiar properties by which he is distinguished. This we may do by consulting his word and his works. There his character is distinctly portrayed; there all the distinguishing attri-

butes of his being are revealed. By familiarizing ourselves with this revelation, we may easily arrive at some accurate knowledge of the character of God, and thus be prepared to remember him intelligently and appropriately. But without such knowledge, our remembrance of our Creator, however fervent and devoted it may be, will necessarily be blind, senseless, and idolatrous; for then we will be worshipping, we know not what.

One of the first duties, then, made incumbent on the young, by this command, is that of studying and endeavouring to become familiar with the character of God. Contemplate his works, and read his attributes as they are written there. Search the scriptures, and learn from their distinct announcements what God is, and in what character he would have us remember and adore him. And thus becoming acquainted with the actual character of your Creator, you will have laid the foundation for thoughts concerning him, at once intelligent and appropriate, and for a remembrance which will consequently be to him acceptable.

3. *To remember God, in the sense of the text, is to remember him cordially, with proper sentiments and affections.* It is not enough that we should often think of God, or even that our thoughts concerning him should always be just and true. Such may be the case, and yet our remembrance be cold, indifferent, and heartless. Such a remembrance may be exercised at times even by the individual in whose heart exist unbelief and enmity against God. That exercise of mind, therefore, which God requires of us in reference to himself, and which he represents as characteristic of his children, must be something more this. It is a remembrance in which the affections harmonize with the thoughts, which consists not merely in thinking about, but in cordially approving and loving the character of God. "My son, give me thy heart," is his demand; and no service wanting this, however perfect in other respects, can be acceptable. We have already intimated that our remembrance should always correspond in character with the nature of the object about which it is exercised. Now nothing can be more evident than that the character of God is such as

to demand from us a remembrance the most affectionate, reverential, and devoted.

His essential excellence demands this of us with an obligation which no virtuous being can resist, and no sinful being deny. If we would remember our Creator, therefore, agreeably to his demands, our thoughts of him must, in the first place, be of a *believing* character. "Without *faith* it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And this faith must be, not merely a general recognition of the truths, that he exists, that he is our Creator, and that he is possessed of such and such characteristics as the scriptures ascribe to him, but a personal appropriation of him to ourselves as our God and Father in Christ; such a faith as will enable us to say, "This God is *our* God for ever and ever."

Farther, our remembrance must be of an *affectionate, loving* character. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," &c., is the great primary precept of the law. To remember God aright and acceptably, therefore, is to cherish a supreme and unalterable attachment to his being and character. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

Finally, our remembrance of God should be *reverential* and *devotional*. It should ever be accompanied with a solemn, realizing sense of his dread majesty, and a hearty disposition to admire and adore his greatness. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised."

4. *We should remember him practically.* This is doubtless the principal thing intended in the text. It would be of little consequence how often or how earnestly we remembered God in our thoughts and meditations, if that remembrance exerted no influence on our lives and conduct. The great ultimate design of God, in all his invitations and commands, is to engage us to a practical submission and obedience to his will. And although for this purpose he primarily addresses himself to our hearts and consciences, and seeks the affectionate homage of our souls, he, at the same time, requires that these internal

sentiments be manifested by corresponding lives. He enjoins upon us that we glorify him, both in our bodies and in our spirits, for both are his, and to both the obligation of his law extends. And since God is essentially a sovereign, and has a rightful claim upon the active obedience of all his creatures, and has given definite and practical rules to regulate their actions, it is evident that no one can remember him aright, without being prompted to do his will. A mere theoretical or sentimental remembrance falls far below the claims of his character upon us. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If we recognise him as our sovereign Lord, which we must do if we remember him aright, surely we cannot do otherwise than acknowledge his authority and endeavour to conform ourselves to his will. And such only as remember him thus are recognised by him as his true friends and followers. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

To meet the obligations of the duty here enjoined, therefore, it is necessary, not only that we often think about God, that our views of his character be correct, and that our meditations be accompanied by suitable sentiments and affections; but also that we endeavour practically to acknowledge his claims upon us, and to live devoted to his service. Our private remembrance of him must be accompanied by a public confession of his name; and our lives in general must bear testimony to the sincerity of our profession by their conformity to his will.

Such, we apprehend, are the principal things included in *remembering God*. And now this duty, you will observe, is specially enjoined upon *the young*. It is indeed incumbent on all; none are exempt from its obligations. Yet there are, at the same time, special reasons enforcing it upon the attention of the young.

II. We propose, therefore, to notice briefly some of the arguments which enforce the injunction of the text; or, in other words, *some reasons why the young especially should remember their Creator* in the manner we have been endeavouring to describe.

1. *All the obligations, requiring this duty of others, equally require it of the young.* It is a mistaken idea

which seems to have taken fast hold of many youthful minds, that religion is designed and suited only for the aged or the mature in years, and that its sober realities are unbecoming the youthful spirit, and that, therefore, in their younger years, they may innocently and safely indulge in levity and folly, putting off the claims of piety to some more suitable period in the distant future. It would not be difficult, did time permit us to enter into the investigation, to ascertain the source or origin of this pernicious sentiment. It can evidently have no other origin or foundation than the natural depravity of the human heart; the secret aversion to God characteristic of human nature. One thing at least must be evident to every candid mind, that such an idea can derive no support from either reason or revelation.

Every circumstance which can be adduced to enforce the service of God upon any of the human family, will apply with equal force to the young and the old. The primary and supreme foundation of all moral obligation is God's sovereignty or his essential authority over us. All the duties, therefore, enjoined by that authority, are equally obligatory on all over whom that authority extends. But to whom does the sovereign authority of God extend? To the old merely, or the middle-aged? No one can question that his sovereignty over us commences with our existence; that from the moment we become his creatures, he has an absolute propriety in us and claim upon our services. As soon, therefore, as we become capable of recognising that authority, and of exercising a moral agency in discerning between good and evil, his claims upon our active obedience become imperative; and no individual capable of moral agency can absolve himself from this obligation. The law of God makes no exceptions in favour of any who hear its demands. Young and old, high and low, rich and poor, are alike subject to its obligations.

Farther, all the subordinate reasons of obedience apply to the young equally with the old. God is he from whom they received their being; he by whom their lot was cast in pleasant places, by whom they have been sustained in life, from infancy to the present moment, and by whom



all the comforts they enjoy have been provided. He is, moreover, their Redeemer, their God, in Christ reconciling them unto himself, blotting out their transgressions, and opening up for them the way to eternal life and glory. All these facts concerning God, which are well fitted to excite our gratitude, and prompt us to love and serve our benefactor, are true in reference to the young as well as any other class of mankind.

Farther, the young have the same need of the comforts and consolations of religion as others. They are exposed to the same trials and troubles. They are equally helpless in themselves; nor is there any other source of comfort and happiness which will occupy the place of the consolations of the gospel. Their own interests, therefore, require that they, as well as others, should remember their Creator.

Finally, they are exposed to the same condemnation as others, in case they neglect this duty. Let no one imagine that youth will constitute an available plea at the judgment bar. It will not and cannot exonerate any moral agent from condemnation for neglected duty. The law of God exempts no age, rank, or condition from its curse, in case of wilful violation. It denounces indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon *every soul* of man that doeth evil. It assures us that the wicked, individually and universally, shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. Let none, then, delude themselves with the idea that forgetfulness of God will not be punished in the young, or that in the last solemn reckoning their youth will constitute a ground of exemption from the penalty of the law.

Thus all the obligations, enforcing the remembrance of God on others, rest equally on the young.

2. *Youth is the best season for performing this duty.* A few facts will make this evident. In the first place, in youth the habit of remembering and serving God is more easily established than at any other period. We are not unmindful here of the fact that the agency of the Spirit alone can produce gracious habits in any soul, and that that agency is sufficient to establish such habits, even in the most unfavourable circumstances. Yet while we

admit this fact, we are at the same time to remember that the Spirit ordinarily performs his work through the operation of secondary causes or influences; and we are not, under ordinary circumstances, to expect that his work will be performed when all secondary causes are against it. And, on the other hand, when we see the greatest amount of secondary influences concurring with the agency of the Spirit, tending to produce the same result, it is natural to conclude that then the work will be most easily and readily accomplished. Now such, we observe, are the circumstances of youth, that the habits of piety are more easily established then than at any other period of life.

For, in the first place, *the hearts of the young are ordinarily more tender, and more susceptible of religious impressions*, than they will be at any after period. The tenderness and susceptibility of the youthful heart are proverbial. The influence of passion, of sensuality, of avarice, and of ambition, have not yet been fully experienced, nor have their hardening and corrupting effects upon the soul been realized. The affections of the young are naturally vigorous and active; their fears are easily aroused, their hopes are ardent, and their confidence easily acquired. These characteristics render them more open to impressions of divine things. There are no fixed habits of vice or immorality to encounter and overcome—no deeply rooted attachment to the vanities and follies of the world—no confirmed spirit of opposition to things divine, to be removed. Thus, apart from that natural depravity existing in every human heart, the youthful mind presents an open and unobstructed field for the operations of divine grace. Under such circumstances, it is reasonable to suppose that the habit of remembering and serving God will be more easily acquired and established than at any subsequent period. Those therefore who desire to acquire and maintain such habits will evidently do well to improve this favourable season for that purpose.

But, farther, youth is peculiarly favourable for the cultivation of piety, because *it is comparatively unoccupied by other objects*. The mind is not absorbed by the cares of the world, as it usually becomes in after life; it is comparatively free from the perplexing anxieties attending the more active periods. Hence it can the more

readily and easily devote its attention to the things which concern its eternal interests. In consequence of their comparative freedom from the absorbing business and cares of active life, the young enjoy special opportunities for reading the word of God, for meditation, prayer, conversing with persons of piety, celebrating the ordinances of the sanctuary, and performing the various active duties of religion. Such a season, therefore, must be peculiarly suitable for the cultivation of piety.

Again, youth is the best season for performing the duty here enjoined, because *the performance of it then is most acceptable to God*. Early piety is an object of peculiar delight to God. The fact that these books of Solomon were written specially for the benefit of the young, is itself an ample proof of this assertion. And the manner in which the early piety of Joseph, Samuel, Abijah, Josiah, Timothy, and others is referred to and commended, strengthens the position. While God beholds with pleasure the homage of his intelligent creatures of every age and character, there is something in the homage of the youthful Christian, whose first rational exercises are consecrated to the remembrance of his Creator, that in a special manner attracts his attention and calls forth his complacent approbation. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth," was the language of God concerning his ancient people; a declaration manifesting his high appreciation of that piety which begins in the youthful heart.

Once more; youth is the best season for beginning the service of God, because *when thus begun, it is productive of the most extensive advantages*. If religion be indeed a system comprising innumerable and peculiar pleasures and enjoyments, as the testimony of the scriptures and of all experience assures us, he evidently will most extensively partake of those enjoyments who has been, at the earliest period, engaged in its services. For to him, ordinarily, is allotted the longest period of familiarity with its privileges. He who only begins the service of God in his declining years has evidently, by his previous neglect, deprived himself of many enjoyments which, in the preceding periods of his life, he might other-

wise have possessed. And not only so, but he has also, by that neglect, rendered himself incapable of enjoying fully the comforts that yet remain. But he, on the other hand, who begins the service of God in youth has, ordinarily, a life-time before him, to walk in those ways of pleasantness and peace, and to partake of its advantages. And the extensive experience thus derived qualifies more fully for enjoying its final pleasures. If we look, therefore, merely at the personal advantages which religion secures to its possessors during the present life, the propriety and importance of embracing it in our earliest years must be obvious.

But, again, an early attention to the claims of religion not only secures greater temporal, but also *greater future and eternal advantages*. It is a well known fact, that in the future reckoning, men will be rewarded according to their works, not indeed on account of them, but in proportion to their number and character. Our Lord illustrates this fact by the parable of the "talents." The servant, according to that representation, who with his one pound had gained ten, was made ruler over ten cities; while he who gained five was made ruler over five cities only. Thus according to the amount and character of our services rendered to God here, will be the extent of our rewards hereafter. Now he who begins the service of God in his youth, and follows it through life, will evidently, under ordinary circumstances, secure to himself the highest rewards, for he will have served God more than other men. This, however, is far from being his whole advantage. He will serve him *better* as well as longer. He will have fewer sins of which to repent, and for which he must answer at the final day, weaker passions and appetites to overcome, feebler temptations to resist, and fewer obstinate habits to break down. He will backslide less frequently, and make a more regular progress in the Christian life. He will have less to lament on a dying bed, and more to remember with comfort and hope in his final account.

Thus youth is a season peculiarly favourable for remembering our Creator, because then the habit of doing so is most easily acquired, is most acceptable, and is attended with the greatest advantages.

3. All future seasons will be comparatively unfavourable to this duty. This is indeed implied in what has been already said; but its importance demands a special notice. The young, in deferring, for the present, attention to the claims of religion, ordinarily delude themselves with the idea that future seasons will be more suitable and favourable for this duty. But nothing can be more false and delusive. Every day an individual continues to neglect the duty of remembering his Creator, he is advancing in sin. Sin is taking a more deep and abiding hold upon his heart. The number and aggravations of his iniquities are constantly accumulating. His aversion to divine things is continually becoming more fixed and violent. His attachment to the vanities and vices of the world becomes, at the same time, more devoted and absorbing. These things are evidently rendering the heart harder, and more insensible to the claims of piety, and more obstinate in the pursuit of sin and folly; and thus the return of the individual to the service of God is daily rendered more difficult and improbable.

These are facts, attested by the consciousness of every sinner. No one can indulge himself a day or an hour in the neglect of a known duty, without finding in his heart an increased aversion to it. No one can indulge for any period in the practice of acknowledged sin, without becoming attached to that sin, and unwilling to be reformed.

But again; as the young advance in life, they will naturally become absorbed in other cares. The common business of life will necessarily occupy much of their time and attention. The vanities and pleasures of the world will claim their leisure hours. Sickiness, pains, and troubles, both of body and of mind, will frequently distract their thoughts, and render their minds unfit for the serious contemplation of things divine. These and a variety of other evils ordinarily attending maturity and age, and rendering them, (as they are justly styled in our text,) the *evil days* of life, these circumstances will evidently render those periods peculiarly unfavourable for entering on the service of God. If then an individual arrives at these seasons without having previously remembered his

Creator, and given himself to his service, the highest probability, short of absolute certainty, is that he will remain in that unhappy condition the remnant of his life. His heart has become so hardened by frequent contact with sin, and by his long continued and absolute resistance of the calls and invitations of the gospel, and his attention is now so entirely absorbed by the cares and vanities of the world, that ordinarily the means of grace can make no impression on him. How few of those who have wholly neglected and despised the service of God in their youth, ever afterwards embrace it! True, there are some, and the fact that there are, is an encouragement to the most aged sinners to hope. But the fact that they are so few in number, and that the great majority of such die as they have lived, is a serious warning to the young not to presume upon the hopes of age. Put off religion now, forget your Creator and his claims upon you, under the vain hope that you will find a more convenient season for attending to these things in mature years or old age, and the great probability, the most absolute certainty, is, that you will finally die as you have lived, godless and hopeless.

4. *Those future seasons may never arrive.* We have said that even should they arrive, they will be *evil days*, burdened with sins and cares and sorrows, rendering them unfavourable to the performance of the duty here enjoined. Even should you live, therefore, to see those convenient seasons which you promise yourselves in the future, you would still run a fearful hazard of finding them wholly unsuitable for this duty. But as the matter stands, in neglecting a present attention to the claims of God, you incur another and still more fearful risk. Those future seasons *may never come*. The uncertainty of human life is one of the plainest and most thoroughly authenticated facts within the compass of human knowledge. It is written in almost every chapter of the Bible. It is inscribed by the finger of God on almost every page of his providence. And this uncertainty, the same evidence teaches, exists in reference to each and every period of life. It attends youth no less than manhood and age. None know the measure of their days. Of the day and

the hour of their final dissolution all are alike ignorant. We may at any moment, even the most unlikely, be summoned hence and called to stand before the judgment-bar. Do you doubt this fact? Recall to mind the deaths which have occurred within your midst, and under your own immediate observation. Go no farther back in your recollections than the late mournful providences which have passed over this community. Ask yourselves, were all the sad removals you were called with sorrowing hearts to witness, confined to the aged or the mature in years? Have you not seen many of your former companions, young, gay, buoyant in spirits as yourselves, suddenly summoned from the walks of life and laid in the grave? Go to yonder grave-yard and read the mournful inscriptions on the silent monuments of the departed. How many of them will you find announcing that those who sleep beneath entered those solitary chambers in the morning of life! And surely these solemn facts have a warning voice for us. They teach us most emphatically that man knoweth not his time, that even in the most unlikely and unexpected moment we may be called to leave the scenes of time, and appear in our disembodied spirits before the judgment-bar of God. How vain, therefore, how inexcusably senseless and dangerous is it to trifle with the present calls of God, under the deceptive hope of a more convenient season in future! Where your all may be lost in a day, or an hour, or a moment, what folly, what madness must it be to postpone to any future period the performance of a duty on which that all depends! "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." "Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer."

In conclusion, let me earnestly and affectionately press this subject upon the attention of my young friends who may hear me. Let me entreat you to consider the obligations resting upon you. Prepare for the evil days to come. Consider the wretchedness of those who encounter those evil days without an interest in God. Have it not to say at last, "*The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*"

Remember *now* thy Creator, in the days of thy youth.

He says, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

[The above sermon has been selected, not only on account of its own excellence, but also in the hope that God may bless it to the souls of some of the youth formerly under the author's charge. By it he being dead yet speaketh. He loved the Saviour from his youth, and we believe he is now enjoying him as his eternal portion. Will not those youth, for whose special benefit this sermon was prepared, imitate his example, follow his instructions, and thus receive the same gracious and glorious reward?]

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## SERMON XI.

### CHRIST KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.\*

Rev. iii. 20: "*Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*"

THESE words are a part of our Lord's address to the church of Laodicea. That church, as we learn from this epistle, had become deeply involved in guilt, had gone far in a course of apostacy from their profession, and were now involved in a deep spiritual lithargy. They had fallen into that state of lukewarm indifference in reference to things divine which, though somewhat removed from abandoned guilt as to its positive criminality, was nevertheless equally, yea, more abhorrent to God. He therefore introduces this address to them with a weighty charge, and cutting rebuke: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot; so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Thus God intimates his severe displeasure with lukewarm or careless Christianity. He would have his followers whole-hearted in his service, fervent, and devoted. Such the Laodiceans were not. And therefore he intimates to them his determination, if they abandoned not their present

\* Preached on the Saturday before the dispensation of the Supper at Clinton; April 13th, 1850.



position, to spew them out of his mouth—to cast them from him as that which is loathed and abhorred.

Still he gives them time and opportunity to repent. He is long-suffering and gracious; and, therefore, instead of immediately devoting them to the endurance of the punishment threatened, he endeavours once more to reclaim them. He endeavours to convince them of the deception they were practising upon themselves in vainly imagining that they were rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing; whereas, in reality, they were “wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Having thus presented to them a striking exhibition of their wretched condition, he unfolds the remedy. Their case was deplorable indeed, but not hopeless. A remedy was provided, and was now freely tendered; and by consenting to embrace it, they would be immediately restored. “I counsel thee to buy of *me* gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see.”

Farther, he urges this counsel upon them by the threatening of a punishment which would surely be inflicted in case they disregarded his admonition. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent.” These apostatizing disciples, though deeply involved in guilt, were still the objects of love. The remnants of grace were still found amongst them, and these God regarded and cherished. Now it is his invariable rule, in dealing with disobedient and rebellious children, to “visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.” The Laodiceans, therefore, while possessing this character, could not expect to escape this consequence: “Be zealous therefore, and repent.”

Once more, he enforces his exhortation by an exhibition of his own gracious attitude toward them, and by an encouraging promise to all who would comply with his call. “Behold I stand at the door, and knock;” &c. Notwithstanding all their disgusting and provoking conduct, their obstinacy and unbelief, their detestable luke-

warmness and indifference, their God-defying pride and self-confidence, still he stood at the door of their hearts in the attitude of a friend, seeking admission. And if any man, no matter who he might be, however vile, degraded and vicious hitherto; if any man would hear his voice and open the door, he would come in to him and entertain him with his gracious presence, and with a rich and royal feast.

Such was our Lord's gracious invitation and promise to the lukewarm Laodiceans. But this passage by no means applies exclusively to them. It is an exhibition of our Lord's method of dealing with careless and lukewarm members of his church, and with reluctant gospel hearers in all ages and every where. In this pleading and entreating attitude he stands before us this day, and with the same gracious promise and invitation he addresses us. To us he says this day, (and O, that every one who hears the declaration might realize that he is thereby specially addressed,) "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me."

It is scarcely necessary to remark that the passage represents, in general, Jesus in his spiritual presence, standing before us in the gospel and its ordinances, and asking admission into our hearts; and the corresponding duty devolving on us, to open our hearts and receive him.

There are in general four things in this passage to which we ask your special attention:

I. THE PERSON, "*Behold I stand,*" &c.

II. THE POSTURE, "*standing* at the door."

III. HIS PETITION OR CALL, "*I knock, hear my voice, and open the door.*"

IV. HIS PROMISE, "*I will come in to him,*" &c.

I. THE PERSON. When any one seeks admission into our presence, our society, or our hearts, the first inquiries of interest and importance are, Who is he? What is his character, and what his claims upon our acceptance? And upon the solution of these inquiries will depend in a great measure his reception or rejection, and the cor-

duality of the one or the other. Accordingly, when we are contemplating the reception or rejection of the individual who represents himself in the text as seeking admission into our hearts, the first inquiries of importance which arise are, Who is he? What are his claims upon us? In answer to these inquiries, no one can be at a loss to designate the person. His own description of his character in the opening of this and the other epistles distinctly points him out as none other than the Son of God. He is the "Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." This clearly indicates his divinity. These are the characteristics of Deity; and the application of them to himself clearly proves that the writer is divine. Again, in the inscription of other epistles, he designates himself as "the Son of God," as he "who was dead, and is alive;" thus pointing out his mediatorial character as the Saviour of sinners. Not only was he God, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning of the creation of God, but he was also "He who was dead, and is alive," the crucified and risen Saviour. But that we may have more distinct views of the character of this person and of his claims to admission into our hearts, notice more particularly,

1. *He is the great and glorious God himself.* Isaiah was well aware of this when, looking forward to the incarnation of the Messiah, he described him by the Spirit of prophecy as "the child born and the Son given," and at the same time bestowed upon him the distinguishing title of "the mighty God." John, also, in recording his history, was fully sensible of this fact, when in setting forth his origin he described him as existing in the beginning with God, and as being God. "In the beginning was the Word,—the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Paul also fully realized this truth when, in describing his condescension in becoming man, he represents him as being originally in the "form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God." In short, the whole tenor of revelation establishes this truth by every variety of confirmation. Direct assertions, arguments, inferences, his own words and works, all com-

bine in evincing the great truth, that Jesus is the mighty God. Here, then, sinners, is one point of view in which you are invited to contemplate the person who asks admission to your hearts. He is the ETERNAL GOD; possessed of all possible perfections; distinguished with glory, honour, and power infinite and eternal; the Creator of heaven and earth; the Judge who decides the destinies of men and angels; the object of all intelligent worship in the universe. This is the person who now addresses you in the text, and asks admission to your hearts. Is he not worthy of the humble boon which he asks? Realize this, his glorious character, and surely no heart can reject him.

2. He is not only the great God, but also *the Saviour*; and in this point of view he has special claims upon your attention. Did he come to you merely as the great and glorious God, your guilty, conscience-stricken hearts might well shrink back in fear, and dread his admission. For, however worthy he might be in himself, the unworthiness of the habitation which he seeks to enter might well make its possessor reluctant to admit him. But now, when he comes to you in the character of a Saviour, compassionate and kind, bringing with him the remedy for all your deficiencies and disorders, he has an additional, an irresistible claim upon your hearts. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King cometh unto thee." But how does he come? In stately majesty, taking vengeance upon sinners? No, says the prophet, "He is just and *having salvation*, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." He comes then in the character of a meek and lowly Saviour. His own language in describing his coming to sinners is, "I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry." He presents himself as one who has finished transgression, and made an end of sin; as one who has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; as one who has wrought out and brought in an everlasting righteousness; in short, as one who is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him. And in this character he now asks admis-

sion to your hearts. And has he not claims? Do not gratitude to him, and regard for your own interest, unite in demanding his reception?

3. Once more; *He is the sinner's best friend*. He has a special regard for your welfare, and therefore it is that he so earnestly asks admittance to your hearts. Not only is he a Saviour by office, but also by inclination. Not only is he able to save you; he is willing, desirous to do it. He has the interests of sinners deeply impressed upon his heart; and his most ardent desires and earnest efforts are for their salvation. Believe you not this? Listen to his own declarations, his expostulations and calls to sinners. "Turn ye, turn ye, *why* will ye die, O house of Israel? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Is not this the language of a friend, of one who is willing, desirous to save you? Listen again to his bitter lamentation over apostate and obstinate Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Is not this the language of friendship, of friendship ardent and devoted, yet despised and rejected? Look at the conduct of Jesus while upon earth. How earnest and devoted was he in doing good to sinners! So much so, that he was styled by way of reproach, (though it was in reality his glory,) "*the friend of sinners*." Such, then, is the prominent characteristic of the person who now asks admission to your hearts. He is your *friend*, one who has an interest in your welfare, and who is desirous of conferring blessings upon you to the extent of his unlimited abilities. View him, then, in this character, and see if your hearts can be so ungrateful and ungenerous as to refuse him the humble boon which he asks.

We have thus endeavoured to describe the person who here presents himself to your notice. He is your God, your Saviour, and your friend. Let us consider,

II. *His position*, "*Behold I stand at the door*." And here two things particularly demand notice, the *place*,

1. As to the place, he represents himself as *at the door*. This intimates his *nearness* to us. He is at the door of every sinner's heart. We are too apt, in our reflections upon the character of the divine Being, to consider him as afar off, dwelling in the distant heavens, and to forget that he is in the midst of us, and about us. Whilst he has his immediate presence in heaven, he is, at the same time, every where. And this is true also of Christ, in his mediatorial character. While heaven is the habitation of his human nature, and of his essential glory, yet as to his gracious presence he is wherever his word is preached, his ordinances dispensed, and where he has souls to save. When, therefore, we are invited to receive him into our hearts, we are not to suppose it necessary to ascend to heaven for that purpose, or to descend into the deep, for he is now present at the door of our hearts ready to come in. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise: Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above;) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou wilt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Thus Christ Jesus, his righteousness and salvation are near to us; they are at the very door of our hearts, and it is only the stubbornness and unbelief of our hearts, barring the door against them, which prevent us from enjoying their immediate presence.

2. But notice farther, *his attitude*. "Behold I *stand* at the door." This intimates his condescension, his patience, and the uncertainty of his longer continuance there.

(1.) *His condescension*. Imagine to yourselves a great and powerful king standing at the humble door of a wretched beggar, and pleading and entreating for admission. Could a greater act of condescension be found among men? And yet infinitely greater is the condescension of the King of kings when he presents himself at the door of the sinner's heart. Although he is the

Lord of the universe, and possessed of all possible dignity and glory, yet is he content for our sakes to *stand* like a slighted and rejected guest at our door entreating admission. But,

(2.) It denotes *his patience*. It is an attitude of *waiting*. He does not merely come to the sinner's heart,—knock, and when first refused, pass on; but he *stands* there *waiting for admission*. And thus our Lord every where represents himself as dealing with sinners. He is long-suffering, and waits to be gracious with them. “All the day long,” he says with reference to Israel, “I have stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.” He represents himself to the spouse, in the song of songs, as having stood at her unopened door, until his head was filled with dew, and his locks with drops of the night. But,

(3.) While our Lord's attitude intimates his patience, it also denotes *the uncertainty of his continuance*. He may wait long, but he will not wait *always*. Remember that he is in a standing posture, ready to depart at any moment. We have no grounds therefore to anticipate his staying if we continue to reject him. On the contrary, we know that he will not always plead with man. He will eventually withdraw himself, and leave them to the darkness which they obstinately bring upon themselves. The spouse, in the song of Solomon, realized this fact. She heard at one time the voice of her Beloved knocking and saying, “Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled.” Yet for a time she disregarded his entreaty, and endeavoured by trifling excuses to evade it. Finally, however, she was aroused, and rose to receive him; but when she opened the door, she found to her dismay that her Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. She sought him, but she could not find him. She called him, but he gave her no answer. In deciding then whether we will admit this entreating guest into our hearts or not, let us bear this fact in mind, that he is merely standing there, and may soon depart, and certainly will eventually depart, if not speedily received. But let us notice more particularly,

, III. HIS PETITION OR CALL. This is expressed by  
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his *knocking*, and his words, "*If any man will hear my voice, and open the door.*" His request is, in general, *admission,—a place in our hearts.*

Here an important fact is presupposed, that the hearts of sinners are closed against Christ. Were this not the case, why should he stand knocking? or, why should he utter that hypothetical expression, "*If any man will open the door?*" If the door of the sinner's heart were not closed against him, he would have no need to stand knocking and entreating. But such is the case. The heart of every unregenerate sinner is closed, bolted and barred against the Saviour. "*The carnal mind is enmity against God.*" Its every emotion, affection, and desire are in opposition to the Saviour. Its very nature is identified with unbelief and enmity. And although the Saviour stands, and calls, and entreats, the carnal heart wraps itself up in insensibility and perverseness, and refuses him admission. "*Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.*" Thus our Lord finds matters situated when he presents himself at the door of the sinner's heart. And similar often is the condition of his own people, who have become lukewarm in his service, or have partially apostatized. Their hearts are closed; a stupid insensibility has crept over them, and it is often long before they can be aroused, or induced again to admit their Lord. Thus it was with the Laodiceans, and thus it was with the spouse, as described by Solomon. When her Beloved came to her, he found the door shut against him. And when he asked for admission, he was put off with frivolous excuses, until finally vexed and provoked he departed. Thus closed against him our Lord often finds the hearts both of sinners and believers.

But when he finds them so, he does not, as he justly might do, immediately turn away and depart, but he stands at their door and *knocks*. And this he does in general by his word, by his providences, and by the strivings of his Spirit.

(1.) He *knocks* at the hearts of gospel hearers *by his word*. Every call and invitation, command, threatening, and promise of the written word is a knock at the door of the heart of him who reads or hears it. Every mes-



sage from him delivered by his commissioned servants to sinners is his voice calling to the sinner who hears it to open his heart to the Saviour.

(2.) Again, he knocks *by providence*. Every dispensation towards us, whether prosperous or adverse, is a silent but expressive message from Christ asking admission to our hearts. Is the dispensation prosperous or favourable? It is the endeavour of Christ to draw us to himself by the constraining influence of gratitude and love. The goodness of God is designed to lead us to repentance. Again, is the providence afflicting? does it consist in bereavements, in losses and crosses? It is the endeavour of Christ to draw our hearts away from other objects, that they may be the more readily opened to him. Again, he knocks by providence when he brings about special occasions and opportunities for giving ourselves away to him; as, for example, when he is saying to us in providence, "O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows." By all such occasions thrown in our way, a special call is addressed to us by Christ to open our hearts for his reception.

(3.) Once more; he knocks at the door of our hearts by the *secret strivings of his Spirit*; sending the Spirit to our hearts, and by his influence convincing of guilt, arousing serious and solemn reflections, and irresistibly drawing our thoughts to himself. Thus in a special manner he knocks and calls for admittance.

In this variety of ways, the Saviour appeals to the hearts of sinners. By the instrumentality of each in turn, he addresses them with the earnest invitation, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with drops of the night." And observe, his invitation is addressed to sinners individually, and to all without exception. "If *any* man will open the door." None need hesitate because he may stand alone in the matter. It is an individual call, and it encourages each one to answer for himself. If it be answered, though it be but by an individual, the promise with which it is enforced shall be to him fulfilled, "If any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

Once more. What are the duties incumbent on sinners in order to answer this call? They are specified as consisting in general in two things; hearing his voice, and opening the door.

(1.) We must, in the first place, *hear and attend to the call of Christ*; however that call may be addressed to us; whether by the written word, by his appointed messengers, by providence, or by the secret suggestions of the Spirit. We must attend to its announcement, otherwise we cannot comply with the other request, to open the door. "Faith cometh by hearing;" but if we refuse to hear, of course we cannot and will not believe. How often do sinners thus refuse the Saviour! They will not listen to his voice. Does he speak to them by the written word? They refuse to read it. Does he call them by the preaching of his word? They absent themselves from his sanctuary. Does he address them by providence? They will not regard the doing of his hand. Does he knock at their hearts by the secret suggestions of his Spirit? They stifle their convictions, and repress their emotions. Such evidently do not hear, and will not hearken to his voice. But if on the contrary we desire to have his promise fulfilled to us, we will hear and attend to his call, "Hear and your soul shall live." But farther, he calls us not only to hear, but,

(2.) *To open the door.* The doors of our hearts are now either entirely or partially closed against Christ. Unbelief, the love of the world, and other secret sins, stand in the way as obstructions to his entrance. These obstructions he now calls upon us to remove. He would have us renounce our unbelief, and cherish the spirit of faith,—abandon all other lords and lovers,—crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts,—put off the old man with his deeds, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds; that thus the way being open he may come into our hearts, and there abide. And these duties he requires of us. For however insufficient we may be to discharge them, they must be accomplished through our instrumentality and efforts. It is while working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, that God works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. Thus our Lord would have

us answer his call; hear it, renounce our unbelief and enmity, and cordially welcome him to our hearts.

IV. HIS PROMISE. "*I will come in to him,*" &c. In these words Christ backs and enforces his petition and call for admission into the sinner's heart. In this large and comprehensive promise, three things may be particularly noticed.

1. *He promises his presence in their souls.* "I will come in to him." If any man will hear his voice, and respond to it by opening the door of his heart, then this shall be the happy result, Christ, the Lord of glory, and the sinner's friend, will come in, and fix his dwelling there. "If any man love me," says our Lord in another place, "he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The spiritual indwelling of Christ in the hearts of his people is a fact frequently asserted in the Scriptures. He is represented by the apostle as dwelling in their hearts by faith. Again, in correspondence with this fact, believers are represented as the temple of God. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" He abides there for the purpose of purifying their hearts, enlightening their minds, strengthening them for duty, supporting them under trials, and imparting a constant, holy joy. And now this honour and privilege is promised to every sinner who will open his heart to receive it. Christ stands ready and waiting to enter, and dwell in the heart of every gospel hearer who will grant him admission. And is not this fact sufficient to induce us to open our hearts unto him? What higher honour or more exalted privilege could be conferred upon us than to have the living God in the character of an intimate friend dwelling in our hearts? And yet this is our honour and our privilege, if we only comply with his own earnest request to receive him. But,

2. *He promises a feast.* "I will sup with him and he with me." The blessings which Christ confers upon sinners who receive him are frequently represented in the scriptures under the character of a feast. The design is to set forth the richness, the variety, and the complete-

ness of those blessings. Every thing necessary for the support, for the entertainment, and even for the luxury of the soul, is provided by Christ, and brought with him when he enters the heart of the sinner. "In this mountain," says he, "shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." And again; "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Thus Christ, when he enters into the heart of the sinner, brings with him a rich and satisfying feast for the entertainment of the soul. It is unnecessary to specify the various articles of which this feast is composed. Suffice it to say that it is a spiritual feast, and comprises all spiritual privileges and enjoyments necessary for the present happiness or future welfare of the soul; pardon of sin, justifying righteousness, spiritual enlightenment, assisting and supporting grace in duty and trial, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and eternal life. And this feast our Lord now brings with him, and offers to every sinner who hears this gospel. "If any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and *sup* with him."

3. He promises *intimate communion with himself*. "I will *sup* with him, and *he* with *me*." Not only does he offer to furnish his guest with a rich and abundant feast, but he also promises fellowship and communion with himself in partaking of that feast. Like a magnificent king dealing with an intimate and honoured friend, he brings him to his own table, and there, while partaking with him of the royal provisions, entertains him with his presence and familiar intercourse. Thus Christ deals with every sinner who comes to him as his guest. He brings him into his own banqueting house, and there not only satisfies his longing soul with the fatness of his house, but also is himself present to entertain, and cheer, and delight him with his fellowship. "Our fellowship," says the apostle, "is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Contemplate then the honour and the happiness which await us in answering the invitation of our Lord, and admitting him to our hearts. Not only will we enjoy a rich and abundant feast, but the king himself will honour us with his intimate fellowship; and there, in the tenderness of familiar friendship, speak peace and gladness to our souls. Are we not then blind to our own interest, and honour, and happiness, as well as senseless to all the dictates of reason and gratitude, when we refuse to open our hearts to this entreating friend, when in answer to his earnest calls for admission we put him off with frivolous excuses, or do not cordially respond, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?"

The subject addresses itself,

1. To lukewarm, careless professors.
2. To sinners. Christ came to save sinners: "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted that are far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."
3. To us, in view of the approaching solemnity.

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## SERMON XII.

### NATURE AND DUTY OF PRAYER.

ROM. xii. 12: "*Continuing instant in prayer.*"

THE chapter of which our text is a part, may be regarded as a practical application of the great doctrinal truths so extensively and so forcibly discussed in the former part of this epistle. The principal subject which had occupied the attention of the apostle, was the important doctrine of justification by faith. In illustrating and confirming this, however, he was necessarily led to consider the various collateral and equally important doctrines of universal depravity, the natural equality of all men, Jews and Gentiles, the impossibility of being justified by works, the nature and necessity of faith, the

privileges of the justified, and the absolute sovereignty of God. All these doctrines accordingly he discusses at length, asserting and vindicating the truth in reference to them, and refuting all contrary suggestions and objections.

Having thus established his doctrinal positions, he now turns to survey the practical results which flow from the truths he had presented. His great object in all his epistles was, not merely to enlighten the understanding with doctrinal knowledge, but also to warm the hearts, and regulate the lives, of those whom he addressed, with its sanctifying influence. And, having clearly presented, and by irrefutable arguments established the doctrines of grace, he proceeds to enforce the practical duties resulting as natural consequences from these great truths. Accordingly he begins this chapter with a general exhortation, in which the great duties of the Christian, and the considerations which enforce them, are summarily comprehended. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c. Here it will be observed that the great doctrine of salvation by free grace is not, as many pretend, inconsistent with holiness, in other words, does not tend, when properly received, to render any one careless or indifferent about the performance of duty. At least, such was not its influence in the estimation of this inspired teacher. He had just been asserting, in the strongest possible terms, the entire freeness of our justification, its absolute independence of good works, and had established this position by the most irrefragable proof; and yet immediately after this, he most earnestly and solemnly enjoins the maintenance of good works. And what is still more to the purpose, he enforces Christian duties by arguments derived from this offensive doctrine of free grace: "I beseech you, *therefore*," says he. That is, since these things are so, since your justification and salvation are wholly the result of God's free, sovereign love, I beseech you, by a consideration of the debt of gratitude you owe to him for this distinguishing favour, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, &c. Thus the doctrine of free grace, instead of being hostile to holiness, is in fact the strongest induce-

ment which can be presented to enforce it. And it is important for those who would obey the commandments of God, to observe the order of all **evangelical** service. It must be founded on an apprehension and appreciation of the mercies of God. Other considerations, such as fear, hope, popular applause, &c.,—may induce a temporary and external obedience; but true, sincere, acceptable, and constant obedience to God, can only be rendered by that man who is impressed with a lively sense of the mercies of God, and who feels the obligation of gratitude to him for those mercies.

Having thus presented those general considerations enforcing on Christians the observance of those evangelical duties which their position requires, the apostle proceeds to enumerate those duties more particularly. This he does, however, without particular order or arrangement; noticing indiscriminately, as he passes along, the duties of non-conformity to the world, humility, diligence in all official and personal duties, brotherly love, fervency of spirit, hopefulness, patience, and prayer. This last mentioned duty is probably introduced in this connexion and form, to intimate that intercourse with God is necessary to the performance of all other duties. Whatever we may *attempt*, without him, we can *do nothing*. The way to obtain his assistance is, according to his own appointment, by *prayer*. This duty, therefore, must stand in intimate connexion with all others; since it is only by proper attention to it that we can expect that assisting grace which is necessary to success in any effort. Occupying such an important position, the duty of prayer has special claims on our serious consideration.

We ask your attention, therefore, while we endeavour to illustrate,

I. THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE DUTY.

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE PERFORMED.

III. THE ARGUMENTS ENFORCING THE DUTY.

I. In the first place then, WE ARE TO OFFER SOME GENERAL REMARKS ON THE NATURE OF THE DUTY.

*Prayer*, we are told by the compilers of our shorter catechism, and a better definition perhaps cannot be given — *is an offering up of our desires to God, for things*

*agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.* To pray, in the primary sense of the word, is to ask; and it implies, in general, a sense of want, a desire for the thing sought, and some confidence in the ability and willingness of the person addressed to bestow it. As the expression is used in the scriptures, however, it has more latitude of meaning; denoting *any* address to God, whether in the way of petition, confession, or thanksgiving. The primary idea of petition, however, which is suggested by the term itself, is always to be kept prominently in view, as an essential part of this act of worship. To define the nature of scriptural prayer more particularly, we remark,

1. *That it must be addressed exclusively to God.* This is so obvious to every reader of the Bible, that it would be needless to spend time in remarking upon it, were it not that many bearing the Christian name have assumed a contrary position, and maintained that prayer should also be addressed to saints and angels. The absurdity of this position is easily proved by the simple consideration that prayer is an *act of worship*. It is an exercise in which we render religious homage and adoration to the being whom we address. Our very petitions convey an implied acknowledgment of his ability to supply our wants, and of our entire dependence on him. But this is the essence of religious worship, and such worship is to be rendered to God alone. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," is the divine injunction, "and *him only* shalt thou serve." This declaration is of itself sufficient to put the question at rest. Prayer, being an act of worship, must be offered only to God: offered to any other being, it is idolatry.

Moreover, it is evident, from the very nature of the case, that no prayer can be of any avail, but that which is offered to God. For, (1.) He alone can *hear prayer*. To God alone belong the attributes of omnipresence and omniscience. These are essential attributes of his divinity, and are communicable to none. But without them no inhabitant of the eternal world could be aware of our desires. To be so, either they must be able to read our



hearts, or human voices must be capable of literally penetrating the heavens, and of being heard in the presence of saints and angels. But neither of these suppositions is consistent with reason or revelation. Being therefore incapable of hearing our prayers, it is evidently worse than folly to address our supplications to saints or angels. On the other hand, God being ever present with us wherever we are, and moreover, being essentially omniscient, not only listens to our words, but understands our thoughts, and the desires of our hearts. He searches the hearts, and tries the reins of the children of men. "Thou compassed my path and my lying down," says David, in an address to God, "and art acquainted with all my ways; for there is not a word in my tongue, but lo! O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." To a being thus conversant with our wants and desires, we may address ourselves with confidence; assured that our petitions cannot fail for want of being heard. (2.) God alone can *grant our requests*. There is nothing at the absolute disposal of created beings. All the influence which saints or angels can exert for the benefit of men, is derived from authority and strength given them of God. Even supposing them to be capable of knowing our wants, they can do nothing for our relief without a commission from God. What could be the use then of praying to them, since they have no power to help? Is it said that they are prayed to merely as intercessors with God, to induce him to favour us? They are nowhere in scripture designated as intercessors, nor have we any evidence that they are permitted to act in that capacity. On the contrary, we are expressly informed that there is but *one* Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Having such a Mediator, who is all sufficient to procure our acceptance with the Father, we need not their interference; it is detracting from the glory due to him to apply to any other.

Since then God alone can hear our prayers or grant our requests, it follows that he alone is a proper object of prayer. Here, however, it will be proper to observe that this act of worship is due to each of the persons of the Trinity. It is indeed usually addressed to the Father,

as the representative of the Godhead; yet it need not and should not be confined to him. As they all possess the same divine nature, they evidently have equal claims to divine worship. And hence in the scriptures, which are our directory in prayer, we have examples of divine worship addressed to the Son and Spirit as well as to the Father. The dying prayer of the martyr Stephen was addressed to Jesus,—“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” The prayer of the prophet Ezekiel, in his vision of the valley of dry bones, was, by the command of God, addressed to the third person of the Trinity. “Come from the four winds, *O Breath*, and breathe upon these slain,” &c. From these, and other examples, it is evident that prayer may be addressed to each person of the Trinity, but to none else.

2. *The matter of our prayers must be the desires of our hearts.* By this we mean, not only that our petitions must be presented in the form of desires, and not as commands or authoritative claims, but chiefly that our requests must be sincere—the language of the heart, and not merely of the lip. “Give me thy heart,” is the demand of God in reference to all the acts of his worship, and nothing less than this will he accept. Hence our Lord so emphatically denounces, as hypocritical and vain, the worship of those who “draw nigh to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, while their heart is far from him.” The only worship which corresponds to the character of God, and which therefore is acceptable, is that which is *spiritual*—the exercise of the soul: for “God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

This applies, in a particular manner, to the duty of prayer. In presenting a petition to an earthly friend, we would have but little reason to expect a favourable answer, if our friend suspected the sincerity of our request. How much less reason have we to expect an answer to petitions, which he not only suspects, but knows, are not the desires of our hearts. God *cannot* be deceived, and he *will not* be mocked. A cold, formal, heartless prayer will not only fail to procure us the favours we ask, but will also expose us to his wrath: for he

is peculiarly jealous of his own ordinances, and will not permit them to be trifled with, or trampled upon, with impunity.

It is an important consideration, therefore, and one which deserves always to be borne in mind, that prayer is an offering up of *desires*—that it is an exercise of the soul, and not merely of the lips. When we engage in this solemn duty, we must stir up the desires of our souls, and let our outward acts be correct indications of our inward feelings. Thus only can we pray with acceptance, or with a hope of success.

3. *Prayer must be offered up for those things only which are agreeable to the will of God.* To ask any thing of God, which we know, from his word, is inconsistent with his will, or to ask it with a view to any sinful or improper use of it, must necessarily be in vain. “Ye ask, and receive not,” says the apostle James, “because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

God cannot, in consistency with his own character, hear a prayer or answer a petition which is contrary, in the matter or design of it, to his revealed will. To do so would involve him in the inconsistency of denying himself—of operating against his own declared purposes. It is only, then, when our petitions are consistent, in their matter and object, with his revealed will, that we have any reason to anticipate a favourable answer. “This is the confidence that we have in him,” says the apostle John, “that if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us.”

Our prayers, then, to be acceptable, must coincide, in their matter and spirit, with his revealed will. God has given us in his word a distinct statement of the blessings which he is willing to bestow upon us; and concerning each of these he has said; “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” And now that our prayers may be acceptable, and that we may confidently expect an answer, they must be based on these promises. We may indeed ask for things which he has not directly promised, as our Saviour did in reference to his cup of suffering; yet our petitions, in such

instances, should always, like his, be offered in humble resignation to his will. "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." But when we pray for promised blessings, we may ask absolutely and in confidence, for we know from his promise that it is his will to grant such. And it is for these principally that we should pray. "For *this*" says he, in reference to his promises, "will I be inquired of." It becomes us, therefore, to make ourselves familiar with his promises, that we may present acceptable petitions.

4. *Prayer, to be acceptable, must be offered in the name of Christ.* And by this we mean, not merely repeating the name of Christ in connexion with our prayers, but a relying on his merits and intercession as our plea for acceptance. A man is said to ask in the name of another, when he uses the merit or credit of his friend as his argument. And so we are said to pray to God in the name of Christ, when we plead his merit and mediation as our argument for acceptance, and not any thing in us, or done by us. That prayer must be offered thus, in order to be acceptable, is plain from repeated declarations of the scriptures. "I am the way," says our Lord, "and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." This declaration of our Lord will evidently apply to all approaches to God in formal acts of worship, as well as to the general act of believing on him, or receiving him as our reconciled Father. No man cometh unto the Father in any way, with acceptance, but through Christ—in reliance on his merits. Hence, says the apostle Paul, in speaking of Christ, (Eph. iii. 12,) "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him;" plainly intimating that it is only through Christ that we can have access to the Father. Our Lord also himself clearly points out this reliance on himself as essential to an acceptable prayer: (John xiv. 14,) "If ye shall ask any thing *in my name*, I will do it." And the necessity of using the name of Christ in our prayers is evident from the very nature of the case. God is holy, just, and righteous; and being such, cannot *look* upon sin, much less accept it with favour. But we are sinners, and all

our prayers, as well as other religious services, are imperfect and mingled with sin. Of course, therefore, if we come to him in our own name, relying simply on the merit of our persons, or services, we must be rejected. But the righteousness of Christ is well pleasing to the Father, and his intercession he heareth always. Taking these as our plea, and presenting them to the Father, we may rest assured we shall not ask in vain. In approaching unto God in prayer, therefore, it is a matter of the first importance, to see that we are making use of that way of access which he has pointed out—that we are relying on the proper ground of hope: for if we fail in this, however else our prayers may be characterized, they will be fruitless.

5. *Prayer should be accompanied with confession and thanksgiving.* We have thus far spoken of this duty, principally in reference to its primary idea of *petition*. It should be remembered, however, that while this is the principal thing in the act of worship under consideration, it does not comprehend it all. Confession of sins committed, and thankful acknowledgment of mercies received, are also, both by precept and example in scripture, exhibited as proper parts of prayer. Thus, in regard to the former, we have the example of Ezra; (Ezra ix. 6,) “O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens:”—of Nehemiah—(Neh. i. 6,) “Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned:”—of Job; (Job vii. 20,) “I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?”—of David—(Ps. xxxii. 5:) “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” Not to multiply references, these are sufficient to show that, according to approved examples of Scripture, confession is a promi-

ment part of prayer. And farther, such confession is represented as essential to a proper petition for forgiveness. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." As we are therefore ever in need of pardon, and as every prayer we offer up should contain a petition for it, confession must be as frequently made of the sins for which we desire pardon.

And the duty of thankfully acknowledging the mercies of God, in our prayers, is enjoined with equal clearness. Thus, (Phil. iv. 6,) "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known unto God." "I will offer thee the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," says David, "and will call upon the name of the Lord." And the very nature of the case renders this duty obviously necessary. If we have received mercies at the hand of God, it is but just and right that we should acknowledge them with thankfulness. The grateful heart will need no argument to enforce this duty. It will be the delight of such a one to record with gratitude the loving kindness of the Lord.

Having thus noticed the *nature* of the duty enjoined, let us now turn our attention more particularly to

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE ATTENDED TO. And here our remarks shall be confined principally to the ideas suggested in the text: "*Continuing instant in prayer.*"

1. *It should be frequently observed.* The language of the text may be considered equivalent to a similar exhortation, addressed to the Thessalonians; "Pray without ceasing." And by this we understand, not that we are to be continually engaged in the formal act of worship; for this would be impossible, or if it were possible, would be inconsistent with the performance of other duties. But we understand the expression as intimating that we should maintain a constant *spirit* of prayer, and that we should attend to it formally, as frequently as other duties and circumstances will admit. And surely it is reasonable to conclude, that the observance of this

duty should be frequent. We constantly stand in need of God's blessing; and prayer is his appointed means for obtaining it. To be rarely engaged in this duty manifests a disregard of the blessing of God, and exposes us to the liability of having it entirely withdrawn from us. For we cannot expect that God will gratify the desires of those who refuse to make them known to him in his appointed way. The precise frequency with which this duty should be observed, cannot, of course, be determined. Each one must judge of this for himself, by a consideration of his circumstances and opportunities. But this much we may say, that unless on extraordinary occasions, it should never be less than *twice daily*. The morning and evening are pointed out, both by their evident fitness for the exercise, and by the example of the pious in all ages, as proper seasons of prayer. David recommends them from his experience: "It is a good thing to show forth the loving kindness of God *in the morning*, and his faithfulness *every night*." And these seasons, it is evident, are peculiarly fitted for regular returns of prayer. They occur at intervals perfectly convenient—terminate, successively, our sleep, and our labour, remind us regularly of all that for which we should pray, and are proper times for establishing ourselves effectually in immovable habits of prayer. He, therefore, who neglects these seasons of prayer, not only casts contempt upon the evident arrangements of Providence, but secures to himself the evil consequences of a prayerless, godless life: for he who neglects these will ultimately restrain all prayer before God, and like the mass of the world live without God, and consequently without hope. In designating the morning and evening, however, as suitable seasons for prayer, let it not be supposed that we would limit any to these. No; the well exercised Christian, he who has the spirit of prayer, cannot be limited to any seasons. He will find frequent opportunities of lifting up his soul to God in the midst of the busy bustle of the day, and in the silent watches of the night. And such prayers, whenever, or wherever offered, are heard and answered. Still it is necessary for all to have regular seasons for attending to this duty; otherwise it is

liable to interruption and neglect. The morning, before the cares of the day have begun, and the evening, after they have closed, afford opportunities which may be improved without interruption or embarrassment.

Let it be farther observed, that continuing instant in prayer implies the use of all methods of prayer. There are in general three different ways of attending to this duty, public, private and secret, each of which are required. Public prayer is that which is offered up in the church, or in any other place, where many are assembled to observe the ordinances of religion. The obligation to engage in this service cannot for a moment be doubted by any one who acknowledges the church and her ordinances to be divine institutions. In engaging in this form of prayer, *one* necessarily speaks in the name of the rest; but all are understood to join in the petitions. It is not the minister alone who prays; it is the congregation which addresses God by his mouth. And it is expected that every one professing to unite in the service, will make the petitions his own, by serious attention to them, and by stirring up the sentiments and affections of which they are expressive. Private prayer is that which is offered up in select associations: whether in the family, or social prayer meetings. That these methods of prayer are incumbent on all, is evident from the example of the saints, in former times—from the teachings of scripture, and from reason. It was an approved resolution of a servant of God, in former times, that not only he, but *he and his house* should serve the Lord. The prophet Jeremiah calls on God to “pour out his fury on the families that call not on his name;” plainly intimating that calling on the name of God, or prayer, is a family duty, and that the neglect of it deserved to be punished with severe judgments. Moreover, that family prayer is an incumbent duty, is evident from the nature of the case. “The same motive which will excite a man to pray for himself, will lead him also to pray for his family, and with them. The relations in which they stand to each other give them a sort of individuality: as there are blessings which they all need, so there are mercies for which they should all be thankful; and inter-



woven as their interests are, the good which any one of them obtains will be regarded as a common blessing. There is no fear of God in that house, in which the exercises of worship are unknown. It is worthy of observation, that it is only among professing Christians that family worship is neglected. Mahometans, and even heathen, act more consistently.”\*

Nor should the social prayer meeting be neglected. It is recorded, as evidence of some religion still existing, in a time of general backsliding, that some met together for social worship. “Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another,” &c. Attendance on such associations will do much, under God, to revive the spirit of piety in a congregation, and to promote the work of grace in individuals.

Still another method of prayer, and one which deserves special attention, is that which is confined to the closet. This is enjoined in the most emphatic manner, by our Lord: (Matt. vi. 6:) “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret.” Every Christian has wants which God alone can supply. He has sorrows and troubles which he would communicate to God alone. To God, therefore, he naturally goes in secret, and secluded from the observation of the world, pours out his soul fully and freely before him. In short, secret prayer is so characteristic of the Christian—so essential to his being—that we may safely pronounce that professor who habitually neglects it, a mere pretender, a hypocrite. It is the life of the Christian’s soul, the very breath of his being. He can no more live without it, than a natural man can live without breathing.

2. Continuing instant in prayer implies *constancy and perseverance*. There are some who, having their consciences aroused by some afflictive providence, or other awakening circumstances, engage in the duty for a time with great zeal and fervour; but soon recovering from their alarm or excitement, relapse again into their former neglect. This, we need not say, is not *continuing* in prayer. Such persons clearly show that their atten-

\* Dick.

dance on the duty was never sincere—never flowed from a love of the exercise. Such, however, our attendance upon it must be, to render our service acceptable. And if such be its character, it will be constant. True, the Christian will often find himself in an improper frame for the duty—his feelings are cold, his graces not in exercise—his mind too much absorbed by other things—but he must not and will not, on that account, neglect the duty. He will go to the throne, and seek the spirit of prayer—never cease wrestling with God till he has attained his wonted warmth and fervency.

3. *Importunity or earnestness.* Too often, Christians go to a throne of grace with a cold, lifeless heart, and seem to be satisfied, if they are able to go through the outward form. There is no apparent warmth or earnestness in their expressions, and there is none felt in their hearts. They engage in the exercise because impelled to it by the workings of conscience, and seem to be heartily glad when the irksome task is over. But surely no one who seriously considers the matter, can dignify such an exercise with the name of *prayer*. To pray *aright* to God, and *successfully*, we must pray with *importunity* and *fervency*. Our Lord once spake a parable to teach us this very lesson, the parable of the unjust judge. And the apostle James tells us, that it is the *effectual fervent* prayer of the righteous man that avails with God. The example of Jacob wrestling with the angel is held up to us to teach us the character of successful prayer. It is earnest, fervent, importunate. If we would succeed, we must go to God with a real and earnest desire to obtain the things which we ask, and with a persevering determination to continue seeking till we obtain.

4. *We must pray in faith.* “Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, *believe* that ye may receive them, and ye shall have them.” “If any of you,” says James, “lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” To ask in faith, is

just to believe, on the ground of God's promise, that he will grant the things which we seek. It is to ask, expecting an answer. And here, no doubt, is the secret of much unanswered prayer. We come before God with a careless unconcern about his promises, or a doubting, wavering frame of mind in regard to them, and, of course, are unheard. If we would be heard, we must give credit to his promises beforehand, and believe we have the things we ask, and we shall have them.

### III. SOME CONSIDERATIONS ENFORCING THE DUTY.

1. *The command of God.* This, in regard to any duty, should be sufficient. If we recognise his authority over us, his directions must exercise a paramount influence over our consciences. We know that what he commands must be right, and for our good. Hence the only question, with the well exercised Christian, is, "Lord, what wilt thou *have* me to do?" Now that God would have us to pray, and to continue instant in prayer, no one can for a moment doubt. Our text, and other passages to which we have referred, prove, beyond the possibility of mistake, that it is the will of God that all should pray to him. Here then we might leave the point. As far as Christians are concerned, surely no other argument is needed. But as there are, perhaps, some present, whose consciences are not so easily impressed with a sense of God's authority, suffer me to suggest one or two other considerations.

2. *Prayer is essential to our well-being.* It is the means by which we obtain the blessings of God. It has indeed been objected to prayer, by many, that it is useless, that it is not necessary to make known our wants or desires to God, for he is omniscient, and knows them all before we pray: nor, it is said, can it be supposed that it will change his purposes in reference to us, for they are fixed, and he is immutable. Now all such reasoning appears very plausible, and would be fatal to the duty of prayer, were it not for one little consideration, which it leaves out of view; and that is, that God always works *by means*, and that he has appointed prayer as the means by which sinners may obtain his blessings. It is the upholding care of God in his providence, all will allow, that

sustains our natural lives. Yet he ordinarily sustains them by the use of food, and other preservatives on our part. But who will say that these means are useless, because God could sustain us without them; or because, if he has intended we shall live longer, we shall live at any rate, whether we use them or not? Who does not see the folly of such reasoning? And equally absurd is it, when applied to the duty of prayer. God's purpose, in reference to the bestowal of blessings upon us, is indeed immutable; yet he has made prayer an indispensable antecedent, on our part, to their reception. And hence, if we neglect the antecedent, the consequent cannot follow. God has taught us that he will be inquired of by us, for the good which he is pleased to bestow. The promise that he will give or we shall receive blessings, is made only to those that ask. "*Ask*, and it shall be given you, *seek*, and ye shall find," is the only language of Revelation on this subject. We may indeed, and we actually do receive many things, in this world, really good in themselves, for which we do not pray. But they are not, and so long as we do not pray, will not be good to us. They have not the blessing of God upon them, and hence, instead of being beneficial, will in the end aggravate our misery. If we have any concern then for our well-being, if we would enjoy the blessing of God which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow, we must pray. The language of the promise is express; "*Ask*, and ye shall receive."

3. *The habitual neglect of this duty exposes to imminent danger.* God is peculiarly jealous of the honour of all his institutions, and of none more so than of the throne of grace. It was an act of special loving-kindness in him, to establish such an ordinance, and to permit sinners to make such a near and important approach to himself. It cannot therefore be expected, that he will permit it to be slighted or neglected with impunity. No! if sinners refuse to improve this means of obtaining his favour, he will not only withhold his favour from them, but will hold them to a fearful reckoning for their abuse of his goodness. The man, therefore, who restrains prayer before God, has a fearful prospect before him. He is treasuring up to himself wrath against the day

of wrath. The God who now sits on a throne of grace, and urges sinners to come to him as the hearer of prayer, will ere long sit on a throne of judgment; and to that throne all *must* approach. And then, and there, the despisers of the throne of grace will receive the due reward of their impiety and reckless stubbornness of heart. Then they shall hear the dread voice of their Judge, bitterly reproaching them for their former contempt of his goodness, and binding them over to its justly merited consequences. "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

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## SERMON XIII.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE AND DEATH.

PHIL. i. 21: "*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"

AT the time this epistle was written, the apostle Paul, its penman, was a prisoner at Rome. His steadfast adherence to the cause of his Master, and faithful testimonies against the errors and vices of his enemies, had aroused their malice against him, and he now suffered the bitterness of their persecuting zeal. He was now imprisoned in a great and wicked city, under the absolute control of the unrelenting enemies of himself and of the cause he had espoused—uncertain what might be the result of his captivity, but with every reason to apprehend the worst. But even in the midst of these discouraging circumstances, his soul was not bound. Bands might lie upon his loins, and fetters upon his hands and feet—gloomy prison walls might shut out his bodily presence from the living world, and stern, unfeeling sentinels guard every avenue of escape—but all were not sufficient to repress the out-goings of his soul to his beloved Lord, or to prevent his rejoicing in the progress of his cause, which even his own afflictions were contributing to ad-

vance. From the recesses of his lonely prison he sends out this word of affectionate counsel and comfort to his dearly beloved Philippian brethren, assuring them of his own comfort and happiness, even in the midst of his present afflictions, and of his confident anticipation of a happy result. And from what source were his comforts and his happy anticipations derived? Not surely from any temporal or earthly prospect, for in this point of view all was gloomy and discouraging. But he derived his consolation from another and better source. He looked upon his sufferings and trials as tending to promote the cause of Christ, and this was an object dearer to him than all earthly enjoyments, possessions, or prospects. He looked out from his gloomy prison and saw the cause of Christ still prospering. He saw too, that even his own afflictions had fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. The endurance of persecution upon his part had emboldened the hearts of his brethren, and rendered them still more confident and fearless and zealous in proclaiming the truth. His trials again had excited others, from envy and a spirit of contention, to emulate his zeal in preaching the same glorious gospel. Now all this was matter of joy and rejoicing to the imprisoned apostle: "Therein," says he, "do I rejoice and will rejoice." To see the cause of Christ thus prospering in consequence of his afflictions, was enough to reconcile him to all his sufferings, and even to make him rejoice in them. And the reason of this simply was, that all his interests, hopes, and feelings were identified with the cause of Christ. He had attained that elevated position of entire consecration to the service of Christ, in which all personal and selfish objects and desires were sacrificed, and his only purpose and desire was that the work of Christ might be promoted, whatever might be the temporal result of his present trials to him. For "to him to live was Christ, and to die was gain." Whether living or dying he considered himself the Lord's; and his earnest expectation and hope was that Christ might be magnified in his body, whether it should be by life or death. With these sentiments he could look forward to the end of his present trials with a happy com-

posure and even joyfulness of spirit. For however dark and uncertain the future seemed, it must result in the accomplishment of one or other of the two great ends which he constantly set before him,—either in life, thus enabling him still further actively to promote the glory of Christ, or in death, and thus bring him into the immediate and complete enjoyment of him, which to him would be emphatically “*gain*.” The words of the text, however, need not be confined to the apostle Paul. They contain a sentiment which was not peculiar to him, but equally belongs to every follower of Christ, wherever and under whatever circumstances he may be. They describe in brief but emphatic and comprehensive terms the *nature and character of the Christian’s life and death*. Of every true believer it may be said, “to him to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” All we propose at present is to inquire briefly into the nature of the Christian’s life and death as here represented.

#### I. THIS LIFE. “To him to live is Christ.”

Perhaps the apostle, by this expression, had chiefly in view to intimate that Christ was the great end or object of his life—that he lived specially with reference to Christ, and with a view to the promotion of his cause. But the expression will include more than this. It intimates not only that Christ is the *end* of every believer’s life, but that *he is* that life,—that its nature and operations, as well as its objects and results, are identified with Christ.

The identity of Christ with the life of the believer may be noticed in three things. He is the *principle*, the *model*, and the *end* of the Christian’s life.

##### 1. *He is the principle of the believer’s life.*

By the *principle* of life we mean the origin or source of it—that from which it springs—the operative cause which produces it. Every kind of life, whether vegetable, animal or spiritual, depends upon some principle from which it springs; for life is but the effect of some latent operative cause. Each kind of life has a principle or originating cause peculiar to itself. Thus the principle which imparts life to the vegetable creation evidently differs from that which quickens the animal kingdom, and

this again is essentially different from that which produces spiritual life. Now the life to which the apostle here refers, is evidently his spiritual existence,—that life which he as a Christian enjoys. This only he regards as life. Merely to be, to enjoy animal existence, was not what the apostle meant by *living*. Those who possessed this life only, he characterizes elsewhere as being “dead while they live.” But with respect to *his* life he informs us that the life which he lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God. It was *spiritual* life—a life of *faith*. It was a life which consisted in the enjoyment of the favour of God; in the perception and appreciation of things spiritual and divine; and in supreme devotion to the service of God. This is the character of that life which distinguishes every believer. Now of this life we assert that Christ is the *principle*—the originating cause and constituting element. “I am crucified with Christ,” says our apostle; and in another place, “nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” Thus the apostle distinctly recognised Christ as the life of his soul. It was Christ’s living in him—dwelling in his heart by faith, that produced and maintained in his soul that spiritual, heavenly life which he so highly valued. And the same is true of every believer. This life is the result of the indwelling of Christ in his heart by faith. Our Lord illustrates this truth in John vi.; where, after representing himself as the bread of life, he informs us that if any man would eat this bread he should live for ever—and again, “Except ye eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in you.” Here, by eating the flesh of the Son of man, our Lord evidently intends the receiving of him in his spiritual character into our hearts by faith. Thus received, he intimates that he will impart or produce life in the soul—but if not received, that life cannot be enjoyed.

From this it plainly follows that it is Christ’s presence in the soul that constitutes the believer’s life—or as the apostle expresses it, “he lives, and yet not he, but Christ lives in him.” Hence says the apostle John,



“He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Christ being the life of the soul, the possession of an interest in him by faith is essential to the enjoyment of life.

2. *Christ is the MODEL of the believer's life.* Every individual has some general model or rule according to which his life is framed. And when that model is closely followed or imitated, the life of the individual who follows is often designated by the name or character of the model. Now the model or exemplar, according to which the believer's life is framed, is Christ, and hence it is properly said, “to him to live is *Christ*.” His life is an exhibition of the principles and characteristics which distinguished Christ. Conformity to the likeness of Christ is the great distinguishing trait of the true believer's life. This fact is frequently revealed and impressed upon our attention in the gospel. Our Saviour frequently enjoined it upon his disciples, as essential to discipleship, that they should follow him. How frequently do we hear him saying to those who would be his disciples, “Follow me;” and by this injunction he could have intended nothing less than a command to imitate him in all his imitable perfections. “I have given you an example,” says he, “that ye should do as I have done.” And agreeably to this, says the apostle, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps;” “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously,” &c. And again, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Thus the life of our Lord while on earth is distinctly placed before us as the pattern of our lives. And accordingly we find the work of sanctification, or the progressive advancement of the believer's life, frequently represented as consisting in conformity to the image of Christ. It is represented as putting on the new man, or image of Christ, and the design of God in predestinating them to eternal life is said to be “that they might be conformed to the image of his Son.” And agreeably to this figure, the apostle represents the

work of sanctification; (2 Cor. iii. 18:) "We all as with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Nor is this conformity to the image of Christ more the object of God's will and purpose, than of the believer's desire and endeavour. To him there is no higher object of ambition than to be like Christ; to have that mind in him which was also in Christ; and to have his life distinguished by the same constant, fervent devotion to God, and active, untiring benevolence to man. Looking upon Christ by faith, as supremely excellent—as the concentration of all that is good and amiable and desirable, he can evidently wish for himself no higher honour or blessedness than to be like him. And hence, when he looks forward to the future state, and endeavours to realize its blessed prospects, the fact upon which his mind fastens, as illustrating the blessedness of that state, is that then he shall be like Christ. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him." Esteeming conformity to Christ thus highly, it will be, while here, not only the object of his ardent desire, but also of his earnest pursuit. He will set Christ Jesus before him as his pattern, and with the eye of faith fixed on him he will go forward, endeavouring so to live that whatever other aspects his life may present, it may be a manifestation of the life of Jesus.

3. *Christ is THE END of the believer's life.* This, as we have already remarked, is perhaps the main idea which the apostle here intended to convey. "For him to live was Christ,"—the great ends and objects that he had in living were all summed up in Christ. Every individual has some object, for the promotion or attainment of which he lives; and to this object all his chief purposes, endeavours, and actions have reference. The great object for which the mass of mankind live is *self*—the attainment of personal ease, pleasure, and honour or aggrandizement. Their aims and purposes in life rise no higher than the gratification of their selfish, carnal inclinations and desires. But here the life of the believer stands

distinguished from that of the world. He has a higher, a nobler end in view, to which his life is consecrated. That end is Christ. "None of us," says the apostle, "liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's." This is descriptive of the true disciple of Christ wherever found. He is an individual wholly devoted to his Lord—an individual whose chief, supreme, and ruling desire is to promote his Master's cause. And that this should be the character of his disciples, was the great object of Christ in laying down his life for them. "For," says the apostle, "he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." The purpose of Christ, in redeeming his people from death, was that henceforth their lives should be consecrated to him. This purpose every believer in Christ will recognise and approve, and endeavour to carry into effect. He will set Christ before him as the great end and object of his life; and endeavour to live with a constant reference to that end.

But is it inquired more particularly in what respects Christ is the end of the believer's life? We answer in general, that it is in respect to *duty* and *enjoyment*. The chief end of man's existence is twofold, comprehending duty or work, and enjoyment.

(1.) Every individual who considers his own nature, and the circumstances in which he is placed in life, must be convinced that he was placed here for the accomplishment of some object—that he was designed to be actively employed in life. No rational being can believe that life and all his mental and physical energies were given him merely to be wasted away in idle dissipation and sloth. On the contrary, every thing in man and about him, all his capacities and energies of body and mind, and all his circumstances and relations in life, unite in evincing the fact that his destiny here is *labour*,—that his Creator designed him for *active employment*. Such being the fact, the question naturally arises, For what end must he labour? What object should he have in view in regu-

lating the employment of his active energies? And to this question the carnal mind readily returns the answer, SELF. Rising no higher in its apprehensions than its own sordid interests, it directs the individual who is governed by it, to devote all his energies to the accomplishment of objects of personal gratification and aggrandizement. But the Christian has a higher object before him. "For to him to live is CHRIST." The glory and honour of his Saviour, and the promotion of his cause, constitute the great end for which he lives. To the accomplishment of these ends he devotes his energies, and whatever other objects may demand his immediate attention, he permits them not to interfere with his ultimate objects. Recognising himself as not his own, but bought with a price, he feels that there is the highest obligation resting upon him to glorify God in his body and spirit, which are his. Accordingly he devotes himself to this object. He engages in those pursuits in life which give him the most extensive opportunity of promoting his Master's cause. And having engaged, he labours therein with diligence, activity and energy. In short, in all that he does he has an ultimate reference to his Master's glory. This is the spirit and disposition of the consecrated disciple of him to whom "to live is Christ." The promotion of Christ's cause and glory are the end of all his labours and efforts.

(2.) But again, Christ is the *end* of the believer for *happiness*. Subordinate to the glory of God every believer has, and rightfully has, a purpose and desire of happiness in life. The benevolent Creator has constituted us with capacities for enjoyment, and has himself made personal comfort and happiness one of the objects of life. Now this object as well as the former the believer centres in Christ. He makes him the supreme source of his happiness, and looks to him for his supreme enjoyment. He takes Christ as his portion, and rejoices in him as constituting "all his salvation and all his desire." To enjoy his Master's favour and communion with him, to enjoy the smiles of his countenance, his guidance and protection here, and his immediate and eternal presence hereafter, is to the believer the highest

conceivable happiness. The present enjoyment and future anticipation of these pleasures gladden his heart more than all the riches and pleasures of earth can gladden the hearts of their most successful worshippers. In seeking his own enjoyment, therefore, the believer lives to Christ. All his prized enjoyments he receives from Christ, and all his anticipations of future happiness are fixed in him. Thus in whatever respect we contemplate the believer's life, whether in reference to duty or happiness, its labours or enjoyments, we find that the end of all is Christ—all point to, and terminate in him. He lives not unto himself, but unto him who loved him and gave himself for him. Such, we apprehend, are some of the things here set forth in reference to the Christian's life by the expression, "For me to live is Christ." Christ is its *principle*, its *model* and its *end*.

II. We now notice briefly THE CHRISTIAN'S DEATH. "*To die is gain.*" Death is an event which awaits every living creature. Whatever may be the nature or the character of their life here, whatever the length of its duration, the decree has gone forth, and is irreversible, that all must die. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," is the sentence of the violated law, which hangs over the head of every member of the human family, and from its execution none can escape. "Death passes upon all men, for that all have sinned." But while death is thus universal in its dominion, how different the character of that dominion to the righteous and the wicked. To the one he is the king of terrors, to the other the harbinger of peace. To the one the angel of death is a messenger of wrath, the bearer of a fatal summons which separates them from all their enjoyments and dismisses them to the horrors of eternal woe. To the other he comes as a messenger of mercy, rescuing them from the ills and perils and sorrows of life, and introducing them to habitations of pure and unfailing blessedness. It was in this latter view that the apostle Paul contemplated death, and it was this view of it which prompted him to pronounce it gain, and to welcome its approach. In the same light may every believer regard that final change which is awaiting him. To every one whose *life* is *Christ*, of whose existence

here Christ is the principle, the model, and the end—the same sentiment applies, *death* to him is *gain*. But how is this? To the carnal mind this sentiment is incomprehensible, incredible. How is it possible, such inquire, that this event can be denominated *gain*, which separates an individual from the personal, domestic, and social enjoyments of earth, which racks his body with agonies and pains without a parallel, which consigns his mortal frame to the degradation of the grave, and sends out his spirit to wander in an unknown, uncertain world, without the possibility of return? Viewed merely in this aspect, there is indeed nothing about death to render it desirable. And this is the only aspect in which the men of world can regard it. But the Christian views it in a different light. To him the blessed gospel which he has received and embraced opens a glorious prospect of life and immortality beyond the grave. Like other men indeed he contemplates death in its agonies, its deprivations and its degradation, as awaiting himself, and when he views it thus he shudders at its approach. But there is another consideration above and beyond all this, upon which his faith is fixed, which to him dissipates all the terrors of death. That consideration is that there is a state of existence beyond the grave, in which he may be, and *will be*, thanks to the mercy of God, far happier than here. It is the consideration that “if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, he has a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” It is his high appreciation of the blessedness of that future state, and his confident hope of entering upon it, when death shall sever him from life, that reconciles him to the agonies of dissolution, and makes even triumph in it as a glorious exchange. The *gain* of death, therefore, is to be computed from its results or consequences, in the happy change which it produces in the believer’s state or condition. And here two things particularly illustrate the gain of the Christian in that change which is produced by death. It delivers him from all the evils of life, and it gives admission to the enjoyment of all possible good.

A change which exempts us from evil, if it do not at the same time deprive us of any real good, must, by all,

be considered a *gain*. Such is the nature of the change death produces in reference to the Christian.

1. *It delivers him from all the ills of life.* Those ills are numerous and various. But from all, death gives the believer complete exemption.

(1.) *It delivers him from sin.* This to the believer is one of the heaviest burdens of life. Hating sin, as every believer must, feeling it to be an evil and a bitter thing, a burden too heavy for him to bear, and being conscious that he is still bearing it about with him through life, that it is still resting upon his soul, he must feel it to be a source of much trouble and vexation of spirit. A sense of the fact that there is a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, imparts a constant feeling of wretchedness: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But from this evil, death gives him deliverance. Once separated from this life, sin can disquiet him no more. Into the high and holy habitations of heaven, into which death introduces the ransomed spirit, sin can never enter. There the happy spirit is for ever free from the corruptions and weaknesses which here depressed it. And is not this a *gain*? Oh! to the mourning believer groaning under a sense of sin, what prospect can be more ravishing? To be entirely freed from sin, to be for ever delivered from the bondage of corruption, to be "made free with the glorious liberty of the sons of God,"—surely this may well be denominated *gain*.

(2.) *It delivers him from all the trials and sorrows of life.* Here the believer is exposed to troubles and trials almost innumerable. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble," is the declaration of inspiration, confirmed by all experience. The Christian has ever found the world a valley of Baca, a place of weeping. The sources from which afflictions spring are almost endlessly diversified. There are sorrows arising from the prevalence of sin, from the temptations of Satan, from the persecutions of the world, from providential dispensations, bereavement of friends, loss of property, sickness and death. To all these and a variety of other sorrows and trials the believer is ever exposed while in life. But

from all these, death gives him complete deliverance. In that blessed state of existence to which death introduces him, sorrow and sighing are unknown. "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." What a happy prospect does this present to the afflicted and mourning believer! Death will give him final relief from all his trials. Is he now oppressed with a sense of sin? Death will for ever separate him from it. "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Is he now tried with temptations of Satan and persecutions of the world? Death will introduce him to a state of being, "where the wicked cease from troubling." Does his heart now bleed under afflictive strokes of Providence, under bereavement of friends? In that better state there will be no death, friends once met will part no more. Do we here groan under bodily pains and afflictions? There, there shall be no more pain, for *all* former things have passed away. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Such is the result of death to the believer. It gives him complete exemption from all the sorrows and trials of life. And is not this *gain*? Who that has once experienced these sorrows will not welcome the deliverer?

2. But the gain of death to the believer consists not merely in the deliverances it gives from evil; it embraces, also, *the acquisition of all possible good*. That state of being into which it introduces him is not one of mere negative happiness. It embraces also positive blessings of the most exalted character. It is not our purpose at present to describe minutely the joys of heaven. They are above and beyond description. Experience alone will reveal them, in all their fulness and variety, to the believer. To sum up the whole of that blessedness in a brief and comprehensive expression, we might state it in the language of Paul, "being for ever with the Lord;" or in the language of John, "being like him, seeing him as he is." All the believer's happiness in heaven, as well as upon earth, is derived from Christ, and centres in him. It will con-



sist in a perfect acquaintance with him, in being made like him, and in a free participation of his joys and glory. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Then we shall obtain a clear and unobstructed knowledge of Christ in all his glories and perfections. "We shall see him as he is." "Now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, then shall we know even as also we are known." Then also we shall enjoy intimate and uninterrupted communion with Christ. Here our communion with Christ is always partial and often interrupted. But in heaven we shall be "ever with the Lord." "Behold," said the voice to John, describing the blessedness of heaven, "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Another item in the blessedness of heaven is, that there we shall be perfectly assimilated to Christ. "We shall be like him." "Our bodies shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body." That mind which was in Christ shall then also be in us, in all perfection.

Finally, we shall partake of his infinite joys and glory, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne." We will not attempt to describe the extent of the honour and blessedness thus represented. They are beyond conception. In contemplating them we can but wonder and admire.

Such then is death to the believer. It delivers him from all the ills and troubles of life, and introduces him to an existence of infinite and eternal blessedness. Well therefore may he style it gain. And now, who in contemplating these things does not say, "Let me die the death of the righteous?" If you would do so, live his life. Let your *life* be *Christ*, and your *death* will be *gain*. Take Christ as your *principle*, *model*, and *end* of life.

See from this subject, 1. The true character of the Christian.

2. His glorious prospects.

## SERMON XIV.

## GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT.\*

1 TIM. v. 6: "*Godliness with contentment is great gain.*"

IN the preceding part of this epistle we have a general summary of the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. The inspired penman is addressing a young minister of the gospel, and his design obviously is, by setting before him a complete system of instructions, to furnish him thoroughly for every good work belonging to his office. Accordingly, he adverts to a great variety of truths and duties, appropriate and important, to be addressed to the various classes of gospel hearers. Having enumerated and briefly commented on these varied topics, the apostle enjoins upon his young disciple to teach and enforce them. "These things teach and exhort." At the same time, however, he forewarns Timothy that in thus faithfully preaching the truth, he would encounter opposition. And in order to prepare him for meeting and overcoming such opposition, he proceeds to describe its nature and character, in appropriate terms. "If any man teach otherwise," (impliedly forewarning him that such would be the case,) "and consent not to wholesome words, he is proud, knowing nothing; from such withdraw thyself."

In thus plainly exposing the true character of these false and heretical teachers, the apostle incidentally unfolds the basis or ground-work of their heresy and opposition to the truth. It originated in their ignorance or misconception of the nature of true religion or godliness. In their estimation, *gain* was godliness. Every thing tending to promote their worldly prosperity and temporal affluence, was regarded by them as not only permitted, but required by the spirit of true religion. In fact, according to this exposition of their creed, they seem to have regarded godliness as only another name for worldly self-interest. Religion with them was but a system of

\* Mr. Hanna's last sermon, preached at Clinton, Jan. 18th, 1852.

financial speculation. All its doctrines and precepts were brought by them to the test of worldly interest, and according to their supposed influence on their temporal prosperity, they were received or rejected, obeyed or despised. Their motto was, "Gain is godliness." Whatever tends to promote our wealth and outward estate, whatever tends to increase our temporal prosperity, is right, is commendable, no matter what precepts of the moral law it may violate, or what principles of justice or truth it may trample in the dust.

There are perhaps few, at the present day, who would openly avow such sentiments; and it may be doubted whether mankind could ever have had the unblushing effrontery to dignify them with the title of *godliness*. Whether avowed or not, however, it is sufficiently evident that such has been the practical sentiment of too many nominal Christians in former times, and is so still. And from this degrading misconception of the true nature of religion, doubtless, have resulted many of the heresies and inconsistencies in practice, which have so often characterized the lives of pretended Christians. Starting out with the principle that religion is but a system of personal, selfish gains, and that whatever, in our opinion, tends to promote our temporal advantage, is not only consistent with its precepts, but required by them—they are ready at all times to condemn, and if possible, subvert every principle or precept which might seem to conflict with these their selfish purposes.

Hence the apostle earnestly warns his young disciple, and through him, all who would follow holiness, to guard against these base perverters of true and vital piety. "From such withdraw thyself"—have no fellowship with them—countenance them not. And having thus exposed and condemned the unworthy sentiment which would make all godliness to consist in temporal gain, he asserts, and proceeds to prove, that although what we may denominate gain is not always godliness, yet *godliness*, especially when joined with *contentment*, is always *gain*. "*Godliness with contentment is great gain.*" And then he proceeds to substantiate this declaration by illustrating briefly the advantages of godly contentment, and con-

trusting them with the anxieties, sorrows, and dangers of the restless seeker of earthly riches. The design of the whole passage evidently is to discourage that impatient, restless *spirit of covetousness*, so extensively pervading the world, and even the church, and to direct the attention of all to godliness and Christian contentment, as attainments infinitely more valuable, as means of promoting our happiness, than all the acquisitions of the world, however vast or varied.

When all are inquiring "Who will show us any good?" and when the mass of mankind are rushing recklessly after every golden bauble which happens to arise in their view, vainly supposing that in the attainment of treasures on earth lies all their happiness, the text suggests an answer to the general inquiry, which, to the Christian at least, must commend itself as the true wisdom. "*Godliness with contentment is great gain.*"

In directing your attention to the passage, we shall,—

I. ILLUSTRATE BRIEFLY THE TERMS OF THE TEXT.

II. ESTABLISH THE TRUTH OF THE PROPOSITION ASSERTED.

'I. The terms of the text needing illustration are *godliness*, *contentment*, and *gain*. Some clear conception of the ideas conveyed by each of these terms is evidently necessary both to enable us to understand the proposition of which they form parts, and to appreciate the arguments by which it is sustained.

1. *Godliness*. By this term we understand, in general, that frame of spirit and outward deportment otherwise designated by the terms *piety*, *religion*, *goodness*. It denotes, in other words, that inward disposition and outward practice which God approves, and which his law requires. The term *godliness*, as it is used in our language, is supposed to be a contraction of the now obsolete term *godlikeness*; its meaning being *conformity to the image of God*. And this definition perhaps affords the clearest representation of the nature of true religion or piety that could be given. God himself is the embodiment and the best exemplification of holiness that ever was or ever will be given. What higher idea of piety, therefore, could be given than that conveyed by the phrase "being *like* him?" As there is no reference,

however, to this similarity to God, in the original term here employed, we shall not dwell upon this idea in this connexion, but endeavour to define the term in a more general manner. And,

1. *True godliness is founded in FAITH upon the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is its starting point—its foundation principle, and the first step of its development. “No man,” says our Lord, “cometh unto the Father *but by me.*” “Without *faith* it is impossible to please him.” He, therefore, who would come unto God and engage acceptably in his service, must first of all believe on him whom the Father hath sent. The reason of this necessity is obvious. Every individual of the human family is by nature guilty in the sight of God, and also morally helpless. Dead in trespasses and sins, he can of himself do nothing spiritually good; and even if he could, his guiltiness in the sight of God would prevent the acceptance of his services; for God will by no means clear, much less accept, the guilty. In order, then, that the sinner may become truly holy, he must, first, by some suitable atonement, get rid of the accumulated sins lying against him in the records of divine justice, and he must then obtain grace and strength adequate to the performance of spiritual duties.

Now, for either of these purposes, Jesus Christ is his only resort. In him he has redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins; and in him he has righteousness and strength. In him alone can these essentials to vital piety be obtained. There is, therefore, an absolute necessity, requiring every individual who would be holy, first of all *to believe on the Son of God.* Without this faith, a man may have the form of godliness, but he has not and cannot have its power. He may be moral, amiable, just, and honest, but if he lack faith in the Son of God, he has not a particle of real godliness; for faith is the basis, the corner-stone of piety, and it is as essential to its existence as breath to our natural life.

2. True godliness embraces, as one of its primary and most essential elements, *a sincere and supreme love to God.* “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all

thy strength," is the leading and comprehensive precept of the law given to regulate our piety. And by this law we are taught that true godliness is an inward heart-exercise—that it has its seat in the soul, and does not consist in any mere external manifestations. It has its outward manifestations, it is true, and without these it is not complete; but its primary operations are in the heart, and there is the seat of its power. . But it will be observed also, that this godliness consists chiefly in the outgoings of the *affections* to God. It is no cold and lifeless system of abstract reasonings; it is no mere contemplative philosophy—it is an earnest, fervent outgushing of affection towards the best of beings. Piety, it is true, is not inconsistent with reasoning or philosophy; on the contrary, it gladly embraces them as handmaids to its own development. Yet in thus employing the powers of the mind, godliness infuses into them the warmth and earnestness of a loving heart, transforming them from cold and lifeless abstractions to living and important facts.

Thus godliness is love—pure, earnest, fervent love to the God of all its worship. And this love, let it be once more observed, is *suprême*. It has indeed, other objects which it also fondly cherishes. From God it extends to all who wear his name and bear his image; yet above and beyond all these, true piety lifts the heart supremely up to God. Its language is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee."

3. True godliness embraces also *an external conformity to the law*. This we might safely take for granted, as a necessary consequence of the characteristic to which we have just alluded. If there be love in the heart toward God, it will manifest itself by some measure of external conformity to his will. God has given us a law to regulate our outward conduct. That law is based upon the general precept requiring us to love him sincerely and supremely. If, therefore, that love exist, this will be its expression or outward manifestation—obedience to the law of God. Our Lord says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you;" and again, "He that

hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." True godliness, therefore, although it originates in the heart, and consists mainly in the proper regulation of the feelings and affections, is not confined to the heart. It also influences the life of its subject, and promotes, in his external conduct, a strict conformity to the divine law. The godly man is one who regularly and carefully observes all the external ordinances of gospel worship. The Sabbath, the sanctuary, the word of God read and heard, the family altar, and the closet; all are the objects of his attentive regard. In all these outward means he regularly and constantly waits upon his God. Nor is his piety confined to these external acts of worship. It pervades also all his actions. In all his avocations, in all his intercourse with his fellow-men, in all his dealings, employments, and enjoyments, his conduct is still habitually under the government of the law of God. Whatever he does, his desire and endeavour is to do all to the glory of God.

Thus godliness is a *practical* principle.

4. True godliness embraces *a constant reference to God as the supreme source of the happiness of the soul.* The language of the godly man is, "God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him." "I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation." In the favour of God and in fellowship with him, the godly man finds his chief enjoyment here; and on the prospect of perfectly enjoying him in future, he bases all his hopes of happiness in reference to the world to come. When others are saying, "Who will show us any good?" his prayer is, "Lord, lift thou upon us the light of thy countenance." Believing that in God's favour is life, and that his loving-kindness is better than life, he sets his heart upon that favour and love as the summit of his enjoyments, and seeks them above and beyond all other things. "There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

Thus godliness embraces, in general, faith in Jesus Christ, love to God, conformity to his law, and a constant reference to him as the supreme source of happiness.

2. The next term in the text demanding particular notice is "*contentment*." The original term literally signifies "*a self-sufficiency*." It may refer either to the actual extent of one's possessions, or to the state of his mind in regard to them. In the former case it would denote *a competence*, the possession of a sufficiency of the necessities and comforts of life; in the latter, it would indicate *a peace and quietness of mind* in regard to earthly possessions, a mind satisfied with its lot. Taking it in the former sense, it stands opposed to affluence or wealth; in the latter, to a restless, impatient craving *for* wealth. It is perhaps immaterial which of these meanings be adopted. In either case the sentiment of the apostle is evidently true, and appropriate to the object for which it is stated. It is evidently correct to say that godliness with a *competence* or a mere sufficiency of earthly things, is great gain; and it is equally true that piety with *contentment*, a mind fully satisfied with its lot, whatever that may be, is also an incalculable advantage. The latter, however, is the truth which seems to be asserted here. Thus, at least, our translators seem to have understood it, and hence they have rendered the term in our text, *contentment*.

This term needs no particular illustration. With its signification, all are to some extent familiar. It is a quiet, peaceful frame of mind, resisting alike the depressing influence of want and trouble, and the excitements attendant on prosperity and worldly gain. It is a firm persuasion that all our earthly circumstances are ordered and arranged by our Father and our God, and that, therefore, whatever may be their present aspect, whether prosperous or adverse, they shall ultimately tend to our advantage. It is a prevailing conviction, cherished in the mind, that God reigns, not only over the world at large, but also over our own personal affairs, and that this Judge of all the earth will do right. The mind that cherishes this conviction, therefore, is ever ready to acknowledge, in reference to all the dispensations of Providence towards him, that He hath done all things well. And while the mind of the truly contented man is thus satisfied and at rest, in reference to the past and present, it is equally



so in reference to the future. Instead of being anxious and concerned in regard to future wants and trials; instead of being agitated with painful doubts and fears, and labouring with feverish impatience and restless anxiety to provide temporal protection against these dreaded evils, he humbly commits his case into the hands of his Heavenly Father, and rests in the assurance that he will make all things work for his good. He knows that God "knoweth what things he hath need of," and that he is as good and kind as he is wise. On him, therefore, he casts all his care, persuaded that he careth for him. He is not, however, in the mean time, indolent or idle. Agreeably to his Heavenly Father's own command, he labours in the use of all appointed means, to obtain his desired ends. Yet in thus labouring, his mind is still at rest; he is happy in the assurance that God is his protector and friend, and that consequently all things shall work for his good.

Contentment then is a fruit of faith; it flows from a believing trust in God as our God and friend in Christ. It is a state of mind peculiar to believers. There may be and sometimes is a kind of contentment which is the result of ignorance or insensibility. Such, however, is not true contentment. It is a delusion which may deceive its victim for awhile, but which eventually vanishes, leaving him in all the horrors of conscious wretchedness. Godly contentment is permanent. It sustains the soul of the believer under all circumstances. "I have learned," says the apostle, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." According to our Lord's instructions, the contented Christian takes "no thought what he shall eat, or what he shall drink, or wherewithal he shall be clothed." In regard to these and all earthly things, he rests in the quiet assurance that his "Heavenly Father knoweth that he hath need of them." He seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, believing that all these things shall be added.

Contentment, then, is a quiet, satisfied frame of mind, in regard to all our worldly circumstances, a frame of mind arising from faith.

3. The last term to be defined is "*gain*." And as the

general meaning of this term is sufficiently obvious, we only remark that of course it must here be understood in a spiritual sense. The apostle does not design to assert that godliness with contentment is always productive of what *the world* terms gain, that it always increases a man's wealth and outward estate, for such we know is not the fact. He uses the term *gain*, however, in its true and legitimate sense, as denoting *real, substantial, and permanent advantage*, that which is really productive of the greatest amount of good to the individual, here and hereafter. This is evidently its true import. To style that *gain*, which affords but a momentary gratification, and is counterbalanced by the difficulties and pains attending its acquisition, is manifestly inconsistent with the meaning of the term. True gain is that which evidently remains a real and permanent advantage, after taking into account all the losses connected with its attainment. In this sense the term is here used. And the proposition of the apostle therefore is,

*Godliness, or real, genuine piety, joined with contentment, or a mind perfectly satisfied with its lot, is a real, permanent, and substantial good—an acquisition which, above all others, is worthy of our efforts.*

II. WE ARE TO ESTABLISH THE TRUTH OF THIS PROPOSITION. And there are three sources of evidence, in general, to which we may appeal in proof of this important truth: the testimony of God, the experience of the saints, and the obvious teachings of reason.

1. *The testimony of God.* And for a clear and accurate statement of this evidence, we need not go beyond our text. If we recognise the truth that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and that, therefore, in uttering this as well as other truths, the apostle "spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost," we cannot but regard our text as the express declaration of God. It is God's testimony, therefore, to the value and importance of godliness and Christian contentment. It is not the mere opinion of the apostle; it is not merely the result of his observation and experience; it is the authoritative declaration of God himself. And surely such a declaration must be regarded as conclusive evidence of the

truth which it asserts. It is the declaration of one who is infinite in wisdom, and who is Truth itself—one who cannot be deceived, and who could not possibly deceive others. Whatever he asserts must, from the very nature of the case, be the very truth. And this, let it be observed, is his assertion: "Godliness with contentment is great gain;" and again; "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And what better evidence of the truth of this fact could be demanded? He whose wisdom comprehends all things that exist, who is perfectly acquainted with all the schemes of happiness and profit pursued by men, pronounces, in view of them all, that godliness with contentment is the chief, the great *gain*. Surely to the believer in God, at least, this is sufficient.

2. *The experience of the saints* forms another conclusive evidence of the same truth. While we regard the declaration of the text, in common with all other scripture, as the word of God, and the apostle, in penning it, as under the immediate inspiration of God, it is not inconsistent to suppose, at the same time, that he was giving expression to his own experience. Doubtless the personal experience and feelings of the inspired writers often, (if not always,) coincided with the suggestions of the Spirit. So that when they wrote, they were prompted to write, both by the teachings of the Spirit and by their own personal knowledge. The text, we apprehend, is an instance of this kind. While the apostle here utters the testimony of God in favour of godliness and contentment, in obedience to the impulses of the Spirit, we think he, at the same time, expresses the result of his own experience. He had already tested the truth of the fact asserted. He had tried the service of God, and in connexion with a deep and abiding spirit of devotion, he had also acquired a spirit of Christian contentment. He had learned, in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content. And now, after all this experience, this is his testimony; "Godliness with contentment is great gain." And when we review the history of his life, how often do we see the evidences of incalculable gain which he derived from this source. His life, ever after his conver-

sion was a constant scene of trouble. Listen to his own account of his trials; 2 Cor. xi. 23—27. And yet in the midst of all these trials he was constantly rejoicing. "We are troubled on every side, yet not in despair; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." And "we glory in tribulations." And why was this? Temporal consolations did not support him, for of these he was destitute; it was the power of *godliness*, of a *peaceful* and *contented spirit*; a mind at peace with God, with itself, and with the world, and rejoicing in the full assurance of faith.

The Psalmist also gives, as the result of his observation and experience, his testimony to the value of piety and contentment. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the day of famine they shall be satisfied." "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Many other testimonies of a similar character might be adduced. In fact, the experience of all who have ever tested the point confirms this truth. Still in all this evidence there is a material defect. It refers merely to the *present* advantages of these attainments; it develops only their *temporal* results. It does not exhibit the *consummation* of their advantages. No saint has ever yet returned to tell us of the blessed results of piety and peace, enjoyed beyond the grave. But O, if their present advantages are such, what may we not conceive the future results to be! If godliness and contentment, even in this life, are connected with such blessedness, what will they not be when perfectly developed and all their rewards enjoyed! In comparison with these, how do all the acquisitions of earthly gain fade into utter insignificance!

3. *The obvious teachings of reason* add their evidence to the same fact. The very nature of the case shows that godliness with contentment must be *gain*—that they are, for all the purposes of happiness or of real profit, infinitely superior to all the acquisitions of the world.

(1.) *These satisfy the wants and desires of the SOUL.*

All true happiness consists in the gratification of the soul's desires. There may be, indeed, sensual gratifications arising from the indulgence of sensual lusts and passions; but who would pronounce them true or rational enjoyments? All substantial happiness is acknowledged to be in the *mind* or *soul*, and to consist in the gratification of the moral and better faculties of our nature. But how shall this substantial mental or moral happiness be produced? Can it be by the acquisition of earthly riches—by carnal pleasures? No; it can only be by something answering to the nature of the soul—something of a moral and spiritual nature. And such is the nature of godliness and contentment. These, therefore, meet the wants of man's moral nature, and consequently promote his true enjoyment. They promote the peace, the comfort, and the profit of the soul, in a manner too, and to an extent that no other attainments can. Now, as the soul is the better part of the man, whatever tends to promote its happiness and welfare may justly be denominated *gain*. Contrast this with earthly gain. "What is a man profited, though he should gain *the whole world* and lose *his own soul*? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

(2.) Another circumstance illustrating this truth is that *these attainments are unattended with the cares, anxieties, and dangers which accompany other acquisitions*. The apostle seems to allude to this in the context by way of contrast, in referring to the difficulties and dangers attending the career of those who seek earthly riches: "Those that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Such is the effect of making the riches of this world an object of desire and pursuit. The acquisition of them always involves peril to the soul: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" Their tendency is to make men forget God or proudly disown his authority, to expose their possessors to numerous snares and temptations, and to foster lusts and passions which in the end

drown men in destruction and perdition. We do not say that such is always their result; but such is their uniform tendency, and nothing but divine grace can prevent this result.

But not only are the acquisitions of this world thus dangerous in their results, but they are also productive of much care and unhappiness in the present life: "The love of money is the root of all evil—pierced themselves through with many sorrows." And who is not aware that cares and anxieties of mind are intimately connected with all worldly gains, and are in proportion to them? Now all this, of course, detracts from the real gain or value of such acquisitions. And here the superior advantages of godliness with contentment become apparent. These not only do not produce, but one of their obvious effects is to banish care and trouble. They lead their possessor to be careful for nothing, but in every thing to let his requests be made known unto God, being assured that the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep his heart and mind through Jesus Christ. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." And in connexion with this present peace, godliness secures relief from all future danger. For it has the promise not only of the life that now is, but also of that which is to come. May it not then well be denominated *gain*?

(3.) *These attainments constitute a permanent possession, and secure abiding enjoyments.* The apostle seems to allude to this fact also by way of contrast in the context, when he speaks of the limited duration of all earthly possessions: "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." All our enjoyment of earthly things is necessarily limited to the brief span of life allotted to us here. The proudest of earth's millionaires must leave all his wealth this side the grave. He lies down in the cold and narrow house as poor as the penniless beggar.

"For he shall carry nothing hence,  
When death his days doth end;  
Nor shall his glory after him,  
Into the grave descend."

But in what striking contrast with this do the attainments here alluded to appear! These are possessions which once enjoyed become eternal. Death cannot deprive us of them. That dreaded foe which separates us from all other objects of endearment and attachment, only brings us into more full enjoyment of these spiritual blessings. These constitute the Christian's joy and comfort here, and in the end introduce him to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Now, how much more valuable is a permanent possession than an uncertain, brief, and fleeting one! How fitly then, when contrasted with earthly riches, are godliness and contentment denominated *gain*! How much more worthy are they of our efforts! Our Saviour uses this argument; John vi. 27: "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto *everlasting life*."

Learn,

1. That piety is true policy. It is *gain*, profitable for all things.

2. Overweening anxiety in pursuing worldly objects is inconsistent with true godliness. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

3. True contentment is a result of godliness, godliness *with* contentment a result of faith.

4. Let us cultivate a contented spirit. Our peace, our credit, as well as divine authority require it. "Be content with such things as ye have."

THE END.



















